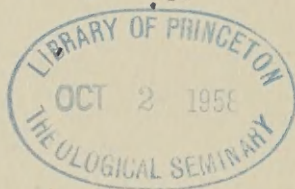
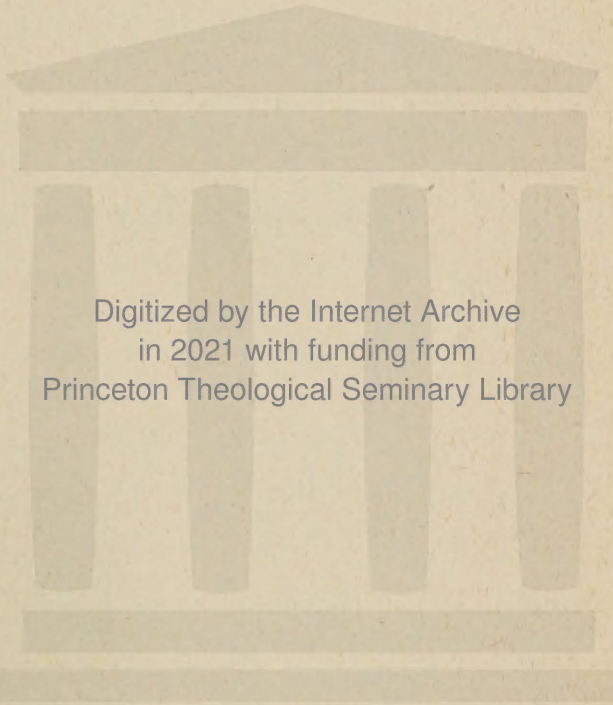




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Moral, Aesthetic, and Religious Insight

BOOKS BY THEODORE MEYER GREENE

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M O R A L , A E S T H E T I C , A N D

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RELIGIOUS INSIGHT

Theodore Meyer Greene

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To Betty

Preface

The central theme of this book has been a major concern of mine for many years. I have discussed it repeatedly with my undergraduate and graduate students, and with my colleagues, at Princeton, at Yale, and more recently here in Claremont. This treatment of it is a development and extension of lectures delivered on three different campuses. Chapter 6 is based on my John Herschel Morron Lecture at Hamilton College in 1954. I first presented my neo-Kantian thesis to a public audience in my Gates Memorial Lectures at Grinnell College in 1956. The present work is directly based on my Brown and Haley Lectures for 1957

at the College of Puget Sound. I should like to thank the Haley family who are sponsors of these Lectures, President R. Franklin Thompson, Dean John D. Regester, and Professors Lyle S. Shelmidine and John Magee for their wonderful hospitality to my wife and myself in Tacoma and for their friendly encouragement and help to me as I struggled to get my manuscript in shape. I should also like to thank the staff of the Rutgers University Press for their expert assistance.

I offer no apology for the brevity of this Essay. Most books, particularly in philosophy, are too long. The reader should, however, be warned that I have been able, in this brief compass, to do little more than state my case and outline my basic argument. I am also aware of the fact that my summary of Kant's position in the three *Critiques* will seem, to students of Kant, to be greatly oversimplified and, to the layman who has not studied Kant at first hand, to be rather difficult. I can only hope that the reader will find my neo-Kantian thesis less inadequate, less difficult, and increasingly persuasive as the Essay proceeds.

THEODORE MEYER GREENE

Scripps College
Claremont, California
July 29, 1957

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Moral, Aesthetic, and Religious Insight

1 *Our Cultural Predicament*

Every cultural epoch has its own crucial concerns which are, usually, historical variants of perennial human problems. This Essay deals with a basic issue of our contemporary Western culture—a many-sided issue that can be formulated in several complementary ways. How, while a precarious peace endures, can we promote cultural and spiritual vitality in our own nation and throughout the globe? How, as thoughtful individuals, can we escape the plight of T. S. Eliot's "hollow men," the loneliness of Riesman's "lonely crowd," the anguish of what W. H. Auden calls our "age of anxiety"? How can we today,

with informed integrity, achieve a viable philosophy of life, a faith to live by?

All times are, of course, times of crisis, not only for the thoughtful contemporary but also, seen in retrospect, for the discerning historian. But certain periods in every culture seem to be periods of radical change and unusual cultural crisis. In Western culture the late Hellenistic era, the fall of the Roman Empire, the end of the Middle Ages, and particularly the end of the Victorian era in World War I seem to be periods of this type. Contemporary diagnoses are precarious, but it does seem increasingly clear today that ours is pre-eminently what Toynbee calls a "time of trouble." It is, however, easier to be assured that this is the case than it is to know precisely the nature of this "trouble." It is even harder to know how our present cultural predicament might be resolved or at least alleviated.

The question which thoughtful people are most persistently asking themselves today is the question, or cluster of questions, which Colin Wilson has explored in his recent book, *The Outsider*, and which Lionel Trilling examines with great skill in *The Opposing Self*. What can I believe? How should I live my life? How can I find a faith that will give meaning to life and endow human existence with purpose and significance?

Today these age-old questions are being asked in a characteristically modern form. Prior to the Renaissance, they were usually formulated in ontological terms, that is, in terms of reality or being. What kind of world are we living in? Is it orderly and purposive? If so, how can we live in conformity to it? These were the problems which Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicureans, and, later, the Medieval theologians discussed so impressively. It was

the Greek Sophists and the Medieval Nominalists who were primarily concerned with the epistemological problem, that is, with the question of whether or not any such knowledge is available to man. Descartes marks the major shift of emphasis from the ontological to the epistemological approach. Descartes' initial doubt was radical. Can we know anything about the self and nature, man and God? His British successors, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, revived and intensified these doubts. Can we know anything with certainty? Indeed, may not our most vital problems defy solution?

This, I submit, is still our central philosophical problem. Logically, and existentially, man's doubts regarding the very possibility of knowledge reflect a deeper concern with being, or reality itself. Why should we concern ourselves with knowledge if the results of knowledge are worthless, that is, if the reality finally known or knowable is not worth knowing? In modern existentialism, the quest for significant insight becomes frenzied because the felt need for being is so desperate and because the quest seems so hopeless. If man's most passionate need is to *feel* real, and therefore to *be* a real person in a meaningful universe, his effort to find meaning and to actualize it in his life is correspondingly urgent. Hence, the prime motive underlying epistemological inquiry is ontological. But the conscious and explicit preoccupation of our thoughtful contemporaries is, nonetheless, epistemological, that is, concerned with the prior problem of knowledge.

It may be objected that one should distinguish the reflective minority from the thoughtless and casual majority. Are not the latter quite oblivious to these epistemological puzzles and wholly preoccupied with the "realities" they are able to encounter or believe in? They are willing to

leave it to the scientists to worry about the hazards of scientific knowledge; they are content to use the technological and medical products of scientific inquiry. They enjoy whatever "art" they find pleasant without cultural qualms, to conform to moral standards which they uncritically accept, to believe, or disbelieve, in the God of their family or group tradition without questioning the objective validity of such belief or disbelief. They accept reality as they encounter it, or as they conceive of it, without epistemological scruple. They believe what they believe without subjecting their beliefs to critical examination. They live their lives in conformity to the conventional values of their society. They relish their pleasures and try to safeguard themselves against the various vicissitudes of life; they face their major and minor disasters with whatever pluck or stoicism they can muster. While they are young and while life remains reasonably secure they seem to lead, in our society, a pretty good life. Indeed, many seem to enjoy life during middle age and in old age retirement.

Yet, how profound is their sense of well-being? How satisfying is a life which is not ultimately meaningful and purposeful? Does not human nature impel men to hunger for participation in a larger pattern of meaning, to crave identification, as finite individuals, with some cause greater than themselves? All available evidence seems to indicate that man feels himself to be most alive when he is most deeply committed to values which transcend his private egoisms and which enable him to forget himself and his fugitive pleasures. The one redeeming feature of war is that it does, on occasion, elicit loyalties of this type which evoke willing heroism and sacrifice. In peacetime it is those who are fortunate enough to achieve such meaningful

loyalties—to truth or justice or beauty, to man or God, in the spirit of selfless love—who also exhibit a zest for life which differs in kind from the lackadaisical day-by-day existence of the average man or woman in any society. Most of us do have our moments of reflective solitude, moments in which we take stock of life and face the certainty of death. These are the moments, however fleeting, of loneliness and ultimate concern, when man's age-old doubts and fears engender a profound anxiety and the anguish of human finitude. Even the "common man," whom intellectuals tend to patronize, asks himself in his own way the questions which have tormented mankind since the dawn of history. What does my life really amount to? What lies ahead, in this life and after death? What kind of universe am I living in? What is there in it worthy of my complete loyalty?

Were these not the crucial problems of mankind, they would hardly merit our serious consideration. We can safely ignore what are merely the conjured-up puzzles of a sophisticated intelligentsia. The problems of the "intellectual" are important only when they are ultimate problems of human life itself, as vital for the relatively inarticulate as they are for those who are critical and voluble. It is significant that these *are* the most vital problems of thoughtful undergraduates today. They are the issues which most deeply concern them. It is also significant that the most acute and critical of our undergraduates reflect the basic scepticism of our age. Their approach is typically epistemological rather than ontological. They are more troubled by the problem of knowledge and the criteria of valid insight than they are by the complementary problem of reality. They are not ready to explore the nature of cosmic order, of beauty and justice, or of God; they

are preoccupied with the anterior question as to whether authentic aesthetic, moral, and religious insight is possible at all and, if so, whether there are any criteria of valid insight.

Walter Lippmann's "acids of modernity" have bitten deeply into our contemporary ethos. Even modern science, our most prized and assured cultural achievement, has not escaped their inroads. Traditionally, science has been valued and respected not only for its amazing technological achievements but also for the *insight* it gave into the structure and behavior of the physical world. Its success in technology remains unchallenged, but some of our philosophically sophisticated scientists have of late seriously questioned the traditional belief that science can give us a more and more reliable and detailed *description* of the physical world. Percy Williams Bridgman's "operation-alism" exemplifies this newborn scepticism. Are the complicated mathematical formulae which modern physicists use to interpret experimental observations and to predict future observations really descriptive of the physical world itself, or are they merely abstract mathematical "models" whose sole function is reliable empirical prediction? Indeed, is it the proper function of science in its most advanced stages to describe the objective world at all? Is it not its sole epistemological function to render its observations of sensory data ever more precise and then, with the aid of strictly non-descriptive mathematical operations, to anticipate and confirm future sensory observations under controlled conditions? Science, thus interpreted, loses none of its value for technology, but it does abdicate its earlier role as man's most reliable source of authentic *insight* into the nature of the physical world.

It is, however, primarily in the areas of moral and

aesthetic value and of religious faith that the scepticism of our times is of crucial import. What dismays our leading scientists as well as thoughtful men and women in all walks of life is the contemporary loss of faith in basic moral and aesthetic values and the difficulty which so many people have today in achieving or maintaining a religious faith which is not only vital but reflective and intellectually honest. This is the axiological and religious problem to which we must now address ourselves.

We cannot, of course, in this brief Essay, explore this vast and complex problem in detail. All that we can attempt to do is to analyze it in simple but basic terms and to try to discover, if possible, an orderly method of procedure. It is a truism that what is most valuable in modern science is not its cumulative achievements, impressive as they are, but its well-tested *method* of inquiry. The actual findings of science in any period are bound to be superseded by later findings. What endures, and what so richly justifies our faith in science, is its complex self-corrective method of orderly and cooperative inquiry. Today we need above all else an analogous *method* of responsible inquiry in the areas of moral and aesthetic value and of religious commitment. Can we, perchance, devise a blueprint for such a method?

2 *Kant's Defense of Scientific Insight*

How shall we tackle our problem? Contemporary philosophy reflects the pluralism of our society. It speaks with many conflicting voices. This, of course, is nothing new; philosophical inquiry has always issued in contrasting diagnoses and emphases. But in some periods a relatively homogeneous society has developed a dominant philosophy. Our age is far too heterogeneous in its ethos to tolerate any such authoritative philosophy. It is idle, therefore, to look for *the* characteristic philosophical answer to our problem. The only prevailing trend is negative rather than affirmative, more sceptical than constructive. The hunger

for honest affirmation is very widespread, but philosophy as a discipline is, even today, more intent on analysis than on synthesis, more disposed to sceptical caution than to venturesome creative affirmation.

This leaves us only three alternatives: to attempt to revive an older philosophy which, in its day, gave men a vital philosophy of life; to invent a brand-new philosophy consonant with contemporary knowledge and responsive to the spiritual needs of modern man; or, finally, to turn to the past for some central insights which might serve as a basis for fresh creative inquiry. The first of these alternatives will recommend itself to those who are traditionalistic by temperament and training; but it will not satisfy those who believe that an age must maintain its vitality by new creative effort, not only in art and literature, politics and economics, but also in philosophy and religion. Authentic originality, in turn, is as rare as it is precious; it must await the unpredictable advent of the creative genius of impressive stature. The third option is, I believe, the most feasible and promising; wisely pursued, it should enable us to recapture and put to present use some of the funded wisdom of the past without the tyranny of a now outmoded philosophical system.

Our philosophical heritage is rich in pregnant ideas and promising perspectives. We could, with the requisite ingenuity, use the central insights of Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle, of Augustine or Aquinas, of Leibniz or Spinoza, of Hegel or Bergson (to name a few likely possibilities), as our intellectual base of operations. It is my own conviction, however, that the eighteenth century philosopher Kant is, for several reasons, our most promising guide.

Kant, unlike the Ancients and the Medievalists, is essentially modern in basic orientation. Indeed, he has probably

done more to set the modern intellectual stage and to mold our contemporary ethos than any other philosopher. No competent philosopher today is a Simon-pure disciple of Kant, but no present-day philosopher can ignore him with impunity. Furthermore, Kant not only saw man's perennial problems through modern eyes; he also grappled, resolutely and powerfully, with the problems which most deeply concern us today. He asked the very questions which are uppermost in our minds. His answers, though we may be critical of some of them, are the *kind* of answers we are looking for. What makes him most useful to us, however, is the method of inquiry which he defined and used so brilliantly in his monumental *Critique of Pure Reason*. This method is, in basic outline, as valid today as it was nearly two centuries ago. It may well prove to be the method of which we are now in search in our efforts to counteract the corroding acids of modernity.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* was Kant's great masterpiece. In it he analyzes the basic presuppositions and implications of ordinary sense perception and of the science of his day. In his *Critique of Practical Reason* he attempts a similar analysis of man's moral experience and its major presuppositions and implications. This venture has established his reputation as one of the notable moralists of our Western culture. Some of his conclusions, however, are open to serious criticism. Kant's analysis of man's aesthetic experience, in the *Critique of Judgment*, though rich in brilliant insights, is on the whole far less impressive. Here his partial failure, as we shall argue, is occasioned by his unwillingness to apply the basic method of the first and second *Critiques* rigorously and consistently to the problems of taste and art criticism. Kant's final great venture, his *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, though

often profound in moral insight, fails almost completely to come to grips with man's religious experience in all its uniqueness. His inability to take religion "seriously" keeps him from applying to it the method of analysis which had proved so fruitful in the first and second *Critiques*.

It is, accordingly, our task to out-Kant Kant—that is, to apply his own method to some types of experience, notably the aesthetic and the religious, more consistently than he himself was able to do. Our purpose will be, not to restate the Kantian philosophy with the fidelity of a conscientious commentator, but rather to plunder Kant's thought for whatever may be of profit to us in our own time. While making full use of his discerning genius, we must presume to improve on him, to develop, if we can, a neo-Kantian approach to the crucial problems of our day. This is not as presumptuous as it might seem. A pigmy may see farther than a giant if he is perched on the giant's shoulders. Actually, no genius in any realm has been able to grasp the full implications of his own insights. Only in the long perspective of history has it been possible wisely to assess the revolutionary ideas of the past.

To understand the central argument of the *Critique of Pure Reason* we must realize how Kant himself defined what he believed to be the major philosophical problem of his day. This necessitates a quick backward look at the epoch-making inquiries of Descartes, the chief philosophical spokesman of the Renaissance. It was Descartes who, having received a sound Scholastic training as a young man, was impelled, during subsequent travels, to ask himself the questions which were destined to become the most characteristic and emotionally charged questions of the modern era. How, he asked, can I be *sure* of the reliability of my waking sense perceptions and of my conventional

moral and religious beliefs? How, indeed, can I have complete confidence in the elaborate "proofs"—mathematical, scientific, and theological—which I have been so painstakingly taught? How, in the light of perceptual error and the temporary seductiveness of my dreams, can I be positive that there actually exists a physical world or that, if it does exist, it actually possesses the sensory characteristics commonly ascribed to it? How, despite the impressive authority of the Church and the theologians, can I be certain that God exists, or that He is what He is alleged to be, or even that I exist as an enduring being possessed of an immortal soul?

These were the questions of which Descartes could not rid himself, and which presently induced him to formulate his famous method of systematic doubt based upon the resolve not to believe in anything (at least for the time being) which he could possibly question. This systematic doubt, coupled with and motivated by his continuing quest for certainty, led him eventually to his first great affirmative discovery epitomized in the famous declaration, "*Cogito, ergo sum*"—"I think, therefore I am." What is the meaning of this cryptic statement? Descartes had discovered that, however doubtful he might be of the *truth* of his ideas about nature, his fellow men, or God, he could not doubt what we today might call the psychological factuality of these ideas or states of consciousness. He found it impossible to question the reality of these mental states *as mental states*, however reliable or misleading they might be as regards the independent realities to which they allegedly pointed. He could not doubt his sensory experiences, as psychological experiences, or his ideas about God while he was introspectively aware of having them. But he could and did question the objective reality of the

physical objects he had believed himself to be perceiving and of the God of whom he was able to form an idea. In short, he could accept with certainty the *processes* of perceiving, doubting, and thinking, and still honestly doubt the reality of their referents or objects.

This explains the *cogito*; but why the *ergo sum*? Here Descartes articulated what is self-evident to common sense, though his assertion was destined to be challenged by many of his successors. Rightly or wrongly, he found it impossible to believe in the processes of perceiving, thinking, or doubting without a perceiver, thinker, or doubter. All such psychological processes must, he believed, be supported by a conscious agent, that is, a subject of consciousness. He was aware that the subject or self here involved could not be directly experienced or observed by introspection; it could only be inferred (hence the *ergo*). But he was convinced that this inference, from the "given" to the "necessary condition" of the given, was an inescapable and valid inference.

Descartes was elated by this discovery, but it left him in a quandary which subsequent philosophers have labeled the "ego-centric predicament." His initial problem still awaited solution. Granted the certainty of the *Cogito, ergo sum*, how could he establish reliable and verifiable contact with any independent and "external" reality, finite or infinite? He was in the predicament of a man encased for life, as a disembodied self, in a telephone booth and cursed with radical doubt as to whether any of the "messages" which he hears do indeed originate outside the booth and, if so, whether they are at all reliable.

We are not here concerned with Descartes' "solution" of the problem—with his typically Scholastic appeal to the traditional proofs of the existence of a benevolent Deity

and his joyful decision that his senses and his reason must, in principle, be reliable because a good God would not condemn him to a state of radical and inescapable illusion. It was Descartes' successors in England and on the Continent who set the stage for Kant's revolutionary approach to Descartes' original problem.

Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, in logical as well as chronological sequence, applied Descartes' own method of doubt to his own affirmative findings with ever increasing scepticism regarding man's ability to know himself, the world of nature, and God, with coercive certainty. Though all of them used reason in their philosophizing, they tended more and more to doubt the reliability of human reason in its pretensions to know any independent reality. Hume finally concluded that we must perforce trust our habitual perceptual expectations and our socially conditioned moral sentiments. No demonstrable knowledge of nature, man, or God is possible.

The Continental rationalists, in contrast, notably Malebranche and Geulincx, Leibniz and Wolff (whose philosophy Kant studied as a young man), moved in exactly the opposite direction. They became progressively more and more dubious of sensation and, indeed, of all man's primary experiences, and came to rely increasingly on pure reason as the one and only reliable way to truth about the objectively real. For them, sensation came to be regarded as "confused reason," whereas the British empiricists had come to regard reason as "decayed sense."

Kant had the genius to realize that there was an element of truth in both of these contrasting positions, but that each, in and of itself, was sterile and indefensible. His early allegiance was to the rationalism of Wolff, but Hume awakened him, on his own confession, from his "dogmatic

slumber." Reason alone, he realized under the impact of Hume's philosophy, can never, of its own accord, establish contact with the objectively real. It can spin out of itself logically consistent propositions, but it can never establish their truth or validate their alleged objective reference. But Kant was equally impressed by the futility, and also by the danger, of Humean scepticism. It seemed to him to undercut the reliability of Newtonian science, on the one hand, and man's deepest moral convictions, on the other. In short, he found Hume's scepticism intolerably corrosive, both intellectually and morally. Hence, Kant's great problem, as he himself envisaged it, was twofold. Assuming, as he did, the validity of scientific inquiry, on the one hand, and of moral "faith," on the other, he asked himself two crucial questions. How is science possible? That is, how, in principle, can we validate the basic presuppositions of scientific inquiry? And how is moral "faith" possible? That is, how, in principle, can we validate the deliverances of man's moral conscience? He set himself the formidable task of answering these two questions successively in his first and second *Critiques*.

Fortunately, we need not here attempt to recapitulate Kant's elaborate analysis in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. All that concerns us here is his basic approach and his chief conclusions. These, in combination, will suffice to indicate his all-important method.*

His approach is characterized by two major assumptions, both of which are of crucial importance to our own inquiry. Both are epistemological; both are concerned with the knowing process as such. The first issues directly out of the head-on conflict of the British empiricists and the Conti-

* Cf. Introduction of *Kant-Selections*, ed. by Theodore Meyer Greene (New York, Scribners, 1929).

mental rationalists. Kant's answer is in effect that both schools are right in what they affirm, and wrong in what they deny. Reason is indeed essential for knowledge, but so is sensation or primary sensory experience. Both the empiricists and the rationalists are like men who are trying to hop on one leg; actually, walking requires two legs duly coordinated. We need primary sensory experiences to put us in contact with the real world of nature, but sense uninterpreted by reason cannot yield truth or meaningful insight. Our knowledge of nature depends upon sense and reason *in combination*; *both* are essential. Kant expressed this profound insight in the most important single sentence in the first *Critique*. "Concepts without percepts are empty; percepts without concepts are blind." Knowledge is the product of rational interpretation of primary experience. Our entire subsequent argument will presume the validity of this insight.

Kant himself referred to his second basic assumption as his "Copernican Revolution." It is his bold and imaginative solution of Descartes' ego-centric predicament. Kant realized that no one can escape this predicament once he is in it. He accepted as valid the British criticisms of Descartes' rationalistic arguments by which he believed himself to have escaped from his ego-centric quandary. To avoid this trap, Kant did what men of major caliber have done repeatedly in the face of an impasse. He asked himself whether Descartes had not misconceived his initial problem and whether it might not be radically restated. If we start with the assumption that the knowing mind may be radically out of touch with, and unrelated to the "object" which it seeks to know, the problem of verifiable knowledge is indeed hopeless. Let us, therefore, assume the opposite—that what we actually start with is

a conscious process with *two* necessary poles, the subjective pole of the knowing agent and the objective pole of the encountered object. Let us, in other words, take the knowing process seriously, as a process of genuine encounter and not as a mere spinning out of one's self of subjective fancies with no cognitive import. We can today best formulate Kant's revolutionary proposal in terms of the more recent concept of Gestalt, or configuration. Let us *start*, says Kant in effect, with the total Gestalt:

knower—knowing—the knowable.

Let us further assume that the three elements of this total configuration are mutually related and dependent, each necessarily involving the other two. We can then proceed, on this initial assumption of the actuality (rather than the dubiety or the impossibility) of knowledge, to examine all three components and to determine cogently the essential nature of each component. This is precisely what Kant proceeded to do, still focusing his attention, in the first *Critique*, upon man's perceptual apprehension of the physical world. He wanted to discover, once for all, the *generic* structure of this total Gestalt, the structure which would necessarily characterize the perceptual experiences of all men everywhere, however various their specific sensory experiences may be.

Kant found the knowing process to be more complex than one might have supposed. It is not only temporal—an ever changing flow or succession of temporal states; it is also essentially spatial in content—we can perceive spatial objects only in space. Perception is also unvaryingly sensuous, a succession of sense data presenting themselves to consciousness during every waking moment. But if this

is the case, how can perception avoid being a mere temporal succession of unrelated though spatially oriented sense data? How can we be aware, as we are, of a series of such data *as a series*? At this point Kant's analysis is especially impressive. What happens, he says, is that each datum, as it fades away, is revived in the form of a memory image which, because of its "warmth and intimacy" (to use a relevant phrase of William James), we accept as "familiar" and therefore identify as the memory image of the original datum. It is the extraordinary feat of memory to revive past experience so that it can be apprehended, after it has transpired, as a unified experience. But memory, as such, cannot suffice to give unity to, or to find unity in, a sensory series. For apprehended unity is apprehended order. Sense perception, as we know it, must involve throughout an ordering process which invokes certain absolutely basic concepts or "categories" of order, notably the categories of quantity, quality, relation (substance and accident, cause and effect), and modality (possibility, existence, and necessity). That is, to have the experience of sense perception involves: (a) receiving spatio-temporal sense data, (b) reviving them in the form of memory images, which serve as their surrogates, and (c) organizing them in terms of certain basic categories. Only by thus interpreting the imagistic replicaes of our primary sensory experiences can we transform an aggregate of distinct sense data into meaningful sensory apprehension.

Kant is primarily concerned, in his analysis of the process of sense perception, with the multiple *activities* which run themselves off so smoothly and harmoniously that we are normally quite unaware of what is happening. He also conceives of these processes, however, in terms of a now somewhat outmoded faculty psychology. We can appre-

hend the temporal and spatial aspects of our experience, he says, because we possess the faculty of spatial and temporal "intuition." We can be aware of sense data thanks to our faculty of "sensuous apprehension." We can recall these data in the guise of familiar memory images because of our faculty of "reproductive imagination." We can order and rationally interpret what we thus apprehend with our faculty of "understanding." All four faculties are, he believes, simultaneously operative in all human sense perception.

In these respects, Kant insists, all human beings are alike; this is the *generic* character of human sense perception. Within this framework, men's perceptual experiences differ from man to man and moment to moment. As Kant himself puts it, we can know *a priori* (that is, prior to any specific experiences, and with complete certainty) that these are man's basic cognitive faculties and that these are the basic processes which, in harmonious coordination, constitute the universal structure or pattern of human sense-perception. But we can only discover *a posteriori* (after the event, on the basis of unpredictable empirical observation) the specific content of any particular act of sense perception and, in addition, the specific empirical concepts which men will employ to interpret these specific experiences in any particular age and culture. All these empirical concepts are merely the particularized variants of the universal categories. They are, nonetheless, of crucial importance, because it is only with their aid that we are able to explore and understand the complex world of nature in all its specificity with ever increasing precision and scope. This is the great achievement of science. It is the scientists who, working cooperatively generation after generation, increase the accuracy of

their sensory observations and devise new and ever more powerful empirical concepts with which to reconstruct and reinterpret the world of nature in all its factual complexity.

Such, in brief outline, is Kant's analysis of the process of sense perception and its refinement by modern science. What does he have to say about the subjective pole of this process—the knowing mind or conscious ego? Kant is aware from the outset that our knowledge of this knowing self cannot be derived from introspection. The self of which we are in search is never the object of conscious awareness because it is always the subject of awareness, even of introspective awareness. As William James later put it, we can no more become introspectively aware of the subject of consciousness than we can turn on the light fast enough to see what the dark looks like. We can only infer what the self *must* be like in order to support the processes just described. But this inference is not, Kant believes, an irresponsible or precarious guess; he calls it “transcendental” and insists that it is both necessary and valid.

To what conclusions regarding the perceiving self, then, does such transcendental inference lead? Kant's answer is, in essence, that we are justified in believing in precisely that self, but only in that self, which is able to support the perceptual process which we have analyzed. We are not justified in asserting the reality of an indestructible “thinking substance,” or of an immortal soul; such a self would be more than we need to explain the possibility of sense perception. But we are justified in conceiving of it as a unifying principle *as* enduring as the span of memory; for memory is inexplicable save in terms of a remembering self which is the same self which had the original experiences and which now, at a later date, remembers them.

Kant's own cumbersome but descriptively accurate label for this self is the "transcendental unity of apperception." It is "transcendental" because it can be discovered only by means of transcendental inference, never by direct introspection. It is a "unity" because its prime function is to unify our successive sensory data and memory images into a single coherent whole. It is a unity of "apperception" because it is precisely this unity, no more and no less, which is required to explain the resultant unity and coherence of sensuous apprehension as we know it.

If Kant's faculty psychology is taken seriously, we must also ascribe to this self the four faculties of intuition, sensation, imagination, and understanding. We need not today make use of the term "faculty," which has recently become psychologically suspect, but it is hard to see how, if Kant's argument has any cogency, we can avoid ascribing to this self the capacity to intuit, sense, imagine, and understand, as Kant defines these four cooperative operations which, in combination, seem to constitute human sense perception. This total process *does* occur and recur. It is patently complex, yet somehow unified and meaningful. Must we not then believe in a subject or subjective principle which constitutes the subjective pole, basis, or matrix of the total process?

This brings us to Kant's epoch-making analysis of the object, or objective pole, of this same process of sense perception. What constitutes its objectivity? Why are we justified in regarding the objects of sense perception, that is, the physical objects which we believe we encounter, to be real and not just the figments of our own creative imagination? It was Descartes' failure to answer this crucial question which finally left him in his ego-centric predicament. Despite Kant's radical new approach to this prob-

lem, he will find himself in the same predicament unless he is first able to give us a satisfactory account of what we actually mean by the objectively real and unless he can then show that what we perceive, the objects of our sense perceptions, really do satisfy the conditions of objective reality as thus defined.

Kant's solution of this problem is, I believe, not only satisfying and valid. It will show us how we can, presently, define objectivity in the areas of man's moral, aesthetic, and religious experiences in such a way as to validate the claim, which we shall make, that these experiences, like sense perception, are also, *in principle*, experiences of the objectively real and therefore the basis for verifiable and reliable moral, aesthetic, and religious insights.

The object, or objective pole, of sense perception is objectively real, says Kant, because it possesses the three basic characteristics of what we mean, or ought to mean, by objective reality. Whatever merits the designation "objectively real" is, in the first place, *coercive*—it possesses a character of its own which forces itself upon our consciousness whether we like it or not. We cannot, by an act of will, change its given nature. This might be called Kant's voluntaristic criterion of reality. We can fancy or imagine what we like, but we can perceive only what we must perceive, that is, what presents itself to us coercively in sense perception. We can, of course, look away from a disagreeable object, or close our eyes; we can direct our attention to some other object or, at least temporarily, decline to perceive anything. But whenever we do allow ourselves to indulge in the process of sense perception, we *must* perceive what is "before us," whatever we actually encounter at the time. This coerciveness is a necessary and universal condition of objectivity; we should not

ascribe objective reality to anything which cannot, in principle, be thus experienced as coercive, and we must and do ascribe *some* sort of reality to whatever *is* thus empirically coercive.

So far, so good; but this coerciveness will not, of itself, suffice to establish what we actually mean by objective reality. What further crucial characteristic does reality possess? It is also *orderly*; we judge to be real only those objects of perception which possess a pattern, structure, or Gestalt, of their own which, as far as we can judge, fits coherently, without contradiction, into that inclusive aggregate of real objects which in sum are entitled the real "world of nature." In other words, no isolated perception can fully validate itself; no isolated object of experience, however vivid and coercive, can validly be accepted as a real physical object or an authentic part of the world of nature unless its reality is consistent with the many other objects of nature whose reality we also accept.

Dreams are a crucial negative case in point. During a vivid dream we are fully persuaded that we are perceiving real objects because they momentarily present themselves to us coercively, with a character of their own. This is particularly true of nightmares. We are frightened by a nightmare precisely because it is so vivid and so terrifying while it lasts. Yet this terror is quickly dispelled (unless we are superstitious and believe in dreams) * as soon as we awake and realize that the nightmare was "just a dream." Why, then, do we, as it were, draw a circle around our dreams and dismiss them as mere dreams and therefore not experiences of "real" objects? We do so because we cannot fit them consistently into the accepted pattern of our waking

* I am not here questioning the value of psychoanalytical interpretations of dreams.

experiences or reconcile the objects encountered in them with what we judge to be the uniform order of nature. For example, I may, while asleep in my home in California, dream that I am being chased by an angry bear in the Maine woods, and this dream may be so detailed, vivid, and coercive that it is, *at the time*, a terrifying experience. Yet when I wake up, I realize that it could not have been an experience of real perceptual objects because I cannot reconcile my actually being in the Maine woods (or in any woods), at 7:29 A.M. and in my bed in California a minute later, at 7:30 A.M. of the same day. Everything I believe regarding geographical distance and locomotion forces me to brand as "unreal" either my dream or my subsequent waking awareness.

But why, in this dilemma, do I isolate the dream and dismiss it as a mere dream; why do I not accept the dream as real and dismiss my awaking in my California home as unreal? I do so for the simple and compelling reason that all my waking experiences hang together, both in memory and in the light of reasonable reflection and interpretation. When I awake, I quickly relate myself to my experiences immediately prior to my falling asleep and to what happened the previous day, and days, and years. Each waking experience, in short, is normally part of a more or less continuous and coherent pattern of experience. Similarly, the perceptual objects which I now apprehend as real conform to all the complex conditions which I have learned to associate with real objects or real natural events. They all satisfy what I have come to believe about spatiality and fit into one all-inclusive space. They are all temporal and present themselves to me in one inclusive flow of time. They are all "substances" or unified entities (or events) with adjectival (or adverbial) attributes. They all possess

more or less intense qualities. Above all, they all conform to those basic regularities which we entitle the causal laws of nature. In short, we justifiably accept as perceptually real that, and only that, which satisfies these orderly conditions of objectivity, and we reject as perceptually unreal (as mere dreams or hallucinations or figments of our imagination) whatever does not conform to these conditions.

Coerciveness and orderliness, thus defined, are the two prime characteristics of the real world of sense perception. The third and final characteristic is logically not on a par with them in importance, but it is, nonetheless, psychologically no less crucial. This is the factor of *publicity*. We can accept as objectively real only what is, at least in principle, equally available to, and potentially or actually real for, all other competent observers or percipient agents. I say "competent" because we make due allowance for the failure of the blind to see what we see, the deaf to hear what we hear, and the unobservant or scientifically untrained to share the observations or the disciplined interpretations of those better qualified in these respects. With these provisos, we insist, as Kant rightly points out, on the universal availability to all human beings of whatever any single human being is entitled to call "real." Our own private states are, indeed, psychologically actual, but their privacy precludes their inclusion among our experiences of real physical objects. Indeed, we distinguish between our perception of an object and the object thus perceived just because the perception, however orderly and coercive, is private to each of us, whereas the object perceived is, we believe, public and therefore also perceivable by others.

This third characteristic of objectivity is not as crucial, logically, as are the other two, because a man should be able, in principle, to satisfy himself, in complete isolation

from others, that an object of which he is aware is a real perceptual object by finding that it possesses the crucial characteristics of coerciveness and orderliness. This is, in fact, the state of mind of a scientist just after he has made what he is convinced is an authentic new discovery but before he has had a chance to share his discovery with his fellow scientists and to benefit from their criticism or confirmation. Their subsequent acceptance of his original discovery does not, in fact, make his fresh insight any more true or its object any more real. All that has happened is that his observations and interpretations have been checked by his peers for possible error. Both psychologically and methodologically, however, this factor of publicity is of very great importance. Psychologically, we are all of us far too finite and unsure of ourselves to feel confident of our own experiences and interpretations until they have been confirmed by others whose competence we respect. Methodologically, our common sense knowledge of the physical world, and particularly our more precise and sophisticated scientific comprehension of it, is essentially the product of extensive social collaboration. Even as laymen, our understanding of nature is largely the result of what we have learned from others and of what we have been taught to observe and understand; and scientists, the more they are forced to specialize, are increasingly dependent upon the findings of their fellow scientists. All this collaboration, both lay and scientific, would be obviously impossible were we not all confronted by one and the same world of nature, common and public to all men.

For reasons which will presently be apparent, Kant entitles our world of nature the "phenomenal" world and its distinguishable objects "phenomenal" objects. He defines this phenomenal world, in the light of the foregoing

analysis, as the sum total of all actual and possible objects of sense experience, each object, in turn, being "objective" or phenomenally "real" in proportion as it possesses the three characteristics which I have labeled coerciveness, orderliness, and publicity.

This definition of phenomenal reality enables Kant, in turn, to specify the three crucial criteria whereby the validity of perceptual judgments about, or alleged insights into, this phenomenal world can be tested. We can, for convenience, label these the criteria of "correspondence," "coherence," and "communicability."

We apply the criterion of correspondence whenever we ask ourselves: To what extent are our perceptual judgments anchored in relevant and accurate sensory observation? To what extent have we taken into account and done justice to all the relevant primary deliverances of direct sense perception, that is, our own primary experience and that of others? This is the criterion to which reference is made in the familiar saying that one ugly fact can upset the most beautiful theory. This criterion of correspondence is the epistemological recognition of that characteristic of objects which we have called their coerciveness.

The second and complementary criterion of coherence is the epistemological recognition of the factor of objective order. Because we believe that we are all confronted by one orderly world of natural objects, subject to the same universal laws or regularities, we are impelled to believe that our several judgments about the detailed nature of this world must not only not contradict each other but should, as far as possible, supplement one another so as to constitute, progressively, a more and more coherent and synoptic comprehension of nature as an orderly whole. Appeal is made to this criterion of coherence when we

discard our belief in the reality of dream objects the moment we awake and reassume responsibility for a mature waking judgment. To believe in the reality of the objects encountered in the dream is utterly inconsistent with the complex system of interlocking perceptual and scientific beliefs to which we subscribe when we are awake and rational.

The third and last criterion of truth addresses itself to the factor of publicity. It too is not on a par, logically, with the other two criteria of truth but, for the reasons already indicated, it is of great psychological and methodological importance. We cannot accept as true any alleged insights which we cannot, at least *in principle*, share with others, that is, with all who are both interested and competent. We do not, of course, insist that all insights, to be valid, must *in fact* be shared by all men. Communicability must be carefully distinguished from actual communication. All that is required is that our insights, to be valid, be capable of being communicated to, and confirmed by, other competent judges. In practice, of course, we depend heavily upon the confirmation of others, both as laymen and as scientists.

Such, in all too brief outline, is Kant's account of the objective pole of man's perceptual experience, that is, the nature of phenomenal objects, and the criteria for testing our perceptual judgments. Two questions still remain unanswered. The first concerns the *kind* of reality which Kant has ascribed to our coercive, orderly, and public world of nature. This question can be asked in two complementary ways. First of all, is this phenomenal world the whole of reality? This is, for Kant, an absolutely crucial question—a question so unique that he feels obliged to invent a fifth basic faculty or capacity as its subjective source. This is the

faculty of "reason," now sharply differentiated from the "understanding." Reason is, for Kant, man's innate ability to conceive of the unique idea of the whole, the absolute totality of things, and to apply this concept as a yardstick to all other concepts. Kant makes explicit use of this idea of the whole in his concluding survey of his own account of the phenomenal world. Is this world, he now asks, the sum total of Reality, as all materialists have tended to insist? His answer in the first *Critique* is clear and unambiguous. We cannot know, merely on the basis of our perceptual experiences, whether the phenomenal world is all there is to Reality or not. Materialists are, in his judgment, premature and unjustifiably dogmatic in their denial of the very possibility of other generic types of revealing human experience. But equally dogmatic and unjustifiable are the rationalists who, without appeal to other types of experience and merely on the basis of reason, insist that Reality transcends phenomena and is apprehensible by reason alone.

Contemporary scientism should take this Kantian rebuke to heart. Our age has outgrown the crude materialism of earlier centuries, but it is still prone to the dogma of scientism that sense perception, as refined in the natural sciences, is man's one and only encounter with Reality and his only path to truth. Such scientism should be sharply distinguished from responsible science, which, by its very nature, refrains from such synoptic generalization and dogmatic pronouncement. Scientism is a philosophical account of Reality which bases itself solely on the findings of natural science and which, in its dogmatic exclusiveness, violates the basic scientific spirit of undogmatic and open-minded humility. Kant was outraged by the dogmatic materialism of his century because it seemed to him to

preclude the possibility of taking man's moral experience, his sense of duty, and his belief in freedom and responsibility seriously. He would be equally critical of contemporary scientism.

If the phenomenal world and Reality as a whole are not necessarily coextensive, we must ask our second question. Assuming the possibility of a more ultimate Reality, how real is the phenomenal world, and how is it related to Reality as a whole if such a more inclusive Reality exists?

Kant's answer to this question is, unfortunately, less clear and unambiguous than we could wish, and Kantian scholars have been in considerable disagreement as to his precise beliefs on this issue. I can merely give my own interpretation, for which I am largely indebted to Kemp Smith's distinguished *Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. It was, I believe, Kant's mature conviction that the phenomenal world is Reality itself *as it appears to human perception*, that is, as encountered by man's senses and apprehended by his human understanding. This would mean that phenomena are completely real but not the only possible "appearances" of Reality to us. We apprehend them as we do for *two* reasons: because *they* actually present themselves to us, and also because *we* are able to receive and grasp them cognitively. But further reaches or dimensions of Reality, if there be such, must remain hidden from us *as perceptual beings* because sense and understanding cannot, in combination, pierce through the veil of phenomenal appearances to what Kant here calls the (possible) "noumenal" world.

Analogies are dangerous, and Kant deliberately avoids all use of them in the first *Critique*; but here an analogy of our own may help. Let us assume that I have, fastened permanently before my eyes, a pair of colored glasses so

constructed that I can see red objects and nothing but red objects. Let us further suppose that I have before me twelve marbles, three red and the other nine, blue and green and yellow. How many marbles shall I be able to see under these conditions, and why? I shall obviously see only three; and I shall see these three for *two* complementary reasons: (a) because *I can* see red objects, and (b) because three red marbles are *really there* to be seen. I shall fail to see the remaining marbles (assuming them also to exist) because, thanks to the limitation of my vision occasioned by my red glasses, I cannot see blue, yellow, or green objects.

We can, still more hazardously, extend this analogy to anticipate Kant's analysis of morality in the second *Critique* and our own neo-Kantian account of man's aesthetic and religious experiences. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant argues, in effect, that man also possesses a second pair of glasses (his capacity for moral insight) with whose aid he *is* able to transcend phenomena and apprehend with moral certitude or what he calls moral "faith" that Moral Law which is the basic law of the noumenal world. I shall extend Kant's own argument two steps further with the contention that man also possesses two more pair of glasses—the capacities for authentic aesthetic and religious insight—and that, with the aid of these additional cognitive capacities, he is able to apprehend not only the aesthetic dimension or aspect of Reality but also its dimension or depth of holiness as well. This, in epitome, is my entire neo-Kantian thesis.

Before concluding our digest of Kant's basic position in the first *Critique* we must answer one final question of major importance. On Kant's analysis of ordinary sense perception and of scientific inquiry, how assured is our

emergent knowledge of phenomena? Here his answer is far less uncertain. *All* our perceptual and scientific knowledge of nature is *reconstructive*. We receive from phenomena various sense data which we accept as clues to the existence and the nature of public phenomenal objects in space and time. These data *come* to us in orderly fashion, but we must apprehend this order with the aid of memory (made possible by the reproductive imagination) and of our understanding. These two faculties, working in conjunction, enable us bit by bit, both individually and collaboratively, to reconstruct the structure and order of the phenomenal world. Even as laymen, without benefit of science, we continue this reconstructive process as long as we are capable of fresh sensory observation and revised perceptual interpretation. Science greatly improves this process with its more precise observations, its controlled experiments, and its far more precise devices for measurement; it also supplants our crude lay patterns of interpretation with powerful, highly abstract, mathematically precise exploratory theories.

As a result, our lay understanding of nature gradually improves (within the limits of our unscientific observations and interpretations), but our most reliable conclusions are bound to remain tentative and crude, however useful they may be for our practical needs and our immediate enjoyment of nature. Science, in turn, thanks to its superb methods of inquiry and verification, forges ahead to ever greater comprehension and assurance. Yet even the scientist must, in the nature of the case, always fail to achieve absolute certainty because he too must proceed inductively, on the basis of a limited number of primary observations. Even the most brilliant scientist never knows, and can never know, in advance whether or not some new

observation (which he cannot possibly foretell) may force him to revise, more or less radically, his most assured and embracing scientific theories. In short, the inductive process can *never* yield us knowledge that is final, absolute, or certain. The most it can do is to give us increasing probability, that is, increasing assurance that we are moving in the right direction and that our reconstruction of phenomena is becoming more and more accurate and complete. This is the limitation, and the strength, of what Kant calls a posteriori knowledge—knowledge based upon man's successive experiences which, by their very nature, can never be exhaustive.

Kant himself, however, believed that a philosopher can, if he knows how to do so, achieve another and superior kind of knowledge of phenomena which he entitles a priori. This is the knowledge which results from a correct analysis of the total Gestalt of the knowing process with its subjective and objective poles. Such an analysis can, in principle, give us a priori certainty because it is based, not on an endless and never completed series of experiences, but upon a generic *type* of experience which, because it is common to all men, is *completely* available to any shrewd philosopher. Kant was hopeful at the beginning of the first *Critique* that he would be able to offer his readers a definitive, absolutely certain, account of the basic structure of the perceptual process and of its subject and object. At the end of the *Critique* he was sure that he had succeeded in this bold venture.

That his analysis is brilliant must be conceded. Indeed, it is our thesis that he was so successful that we would today be well advised to extend his method further than he himself was able to do by applying his basic epistemological concepts and criteria not only to moral values but to

the realms of beauty and holiness. We must, however, question his philosophic claim to a priori certainty, if for no other reason than that all men, even the most astute philosopher, have the inescapable limitations of finitude. Even if we assume, as I myself am prepared to do, that Kant's a priori method of basic philosophical analysis is sound, it does not follow that Kant himself, or any future philosopher, can diagnose and describe the generic structure of this or any other type of human experience with absolute finality. We shall also have occasion, as we proceed, to question what John Dewey has called man's "quest for certainty." May not genuine maturity express itself in a willingness to accept a progressive certitude suitable to finite man, in lieu of a certainty which would seem to be the prerogative of Divine omniscience?

3 *Moral Insight and the Objectively Good*

The spiritual tensions of our times express themselves most clearly in the desperate struggle, in many forms and on many fronts, between authoritarianism and nihilistic relativism. This struggle is going on in the field of art and art criticism. It is crucial in the area of religious faith. It is also evident in the moral sphere—in the moral conflicts of countless individuals and in our corporate efforts to maintain and revitalize our social standards of decency and justice. What, precisely, is this issue between moral authoritarianism and moral nihilism?

Authoritarians make two basic claims. They insist, on

the one hand, that the Good is absolutely real and objective; it is, they believe, woven into the very fabric of our universe and is available to all men at all times as their ultimate standard. They also insist not only that this objective Good is available to all men but that its essential nature can be known with absolute certainty. Yet they differ in their accounts of how the Good can be known with such complete assurance. Some appeal to the indubitable authority of the Church and its infallible dogmas, others to the verbal inspiration of Holy Writ. Some rely on man's reason, some on moral intuition, and many on the dictates of conscience. All authoritarians, however, are agreed that the Good, immutable and absolute, can be known by man with absolute certainty and that all men are, as a result, absolutely obligated by it, whether or not they acknowledge this inescapable obligation.

Extreme or nihilistic relativists, in contrast, deny the objective reality of what the authoritarians call the "Good." They therefore, of necessity, deny the very possibility of moral insight, fallible or infallible. When their preoccupation is primarily epistemological rather than ontological, as it so often is today, they state their case in reverse. They find no evidence to support the authoritarian claim that infallible moral insight is actual, or even possible. They point out that authoritarians disagree radically as to the nature of the "Good" and man's alleged apprehension of it, that man's moral reason has propounded very diverse moral standards, that moral intuition has dictated many diverse moral goals, and that man's conscience seems invariably to reflect the ethos and the mores of his time and culture. They therefore conclude that, even if there were an absolute Good, it could not be known infallibly. Indeed, they see no reason to believe that *any* genuine moral

insight, even fallible and partial, is possible. They therefore conclude that the "Good" is a meaningless concept and had better be abandoned entirely. Their scepticism regarding the possibility of valid and verifiable moral insight impels them to a corresponding scepticism regarding an absolute Good, the alleged object of such insight.

This relativism can fairly be entitled "nihilistic" because its logical result, and indeed its psychological and sociological consequences, are destructive of all moral assurance and issue in a moral vacuum—a moral "nihilism" or nothingness. Relativists do not, of course, deny the inescapable fact that societies in every culture, however primitive or advanced, have their own social mores and standards which are powerfully operative upon the individual, nor do they deny that normally sensitive men and women do evolve a way of life which reflects their own unique temperament as well as the ethos of their society. Such a way of life can, they admit, be espoused with complete sincerity, indeed with passionate loyalty, and they freely acknowledge the value to the individual of such dynamic commitment. They also would insist that a society without widely accepted moral standards is a society in cultural decay and on the brink of cultural anarchy. What they deny is the possibility, in principle, of *defending on any objective basis* the superiority of the ethos or social mores of any society or cultural tradition to those of any other society or culture. They also deny the possibility of individual moral insight and the objective validity of any pronouncement of man's moral reason, intuition, or conscience. All moral judgments, private or corporate, are, they believe, not only relative to time and place, culture and temperament; they are *wholly* relative, with no possible residuum of abiding and universally valid truth.

It may take a long time for the corrosive acids of this nihilistic relativism to eat their way into the moral fiber of a society or to destroy the nerve of individual moral conviction and endeavor. Even in an era of widespread relativism most people are not reflective enough to discover quickly the implications of complete moral nihilism. They still act *as though* there were valid objective moral standards and a real objective Good; they continue, on occasion, to feel righteous conviction, to condemn what they believe to be wrong and to approve and promote what they judge to be right as though their belief and judgment *were* valid. This is clearly what we, as a nation, tend to feel and believe today in our cold war with Russian Communism. We sincerely profess our corporate faith in the basic freedoms, in our political democracy, and in justice under law. We are outraged by the opposite beliefs and practices of Communism, and we have no serious doubts that ours is a righteous cause. It is reasonable to suppose that convinced Communists throughout the world are no less convinced that their objectives are sound and that it is their cause, not ours, which really deserves loyalty and sacrifice. Within our different cultural contexts we, as individual Americans, and they, as individual Russian Communists, persist in our mutually contradictory convictions which reflect our respective cultural backgrounds and our somewhat diverse individual temperaments.

But what must happen in any society as the idea becomes prevalent that *all* values are *merely* relative—that cultures merely differ, and that all moral conviction, whether or not it reflects a social ethos, is ultimately irrational and indefensible? Is not moral cynicism inevitable, first among the more thoughtful and then, increasingly and imperceptibly, among the rank and file? This is borne

out by the record of history—by the progressive corruption and the eventual decay of all the cultures that have lost their corporate faith in an objective Good and, as a result, their corporate moral vitality. Loss of moral conviction will similarly rob the individual of his moral integrity and finally destroy him as a person. The famous case of Loeb and Leopold is but a single instance, extreme and dramatic, of what we today call juvenile delinquency—a social phenomenon which, however complex its causes, certainly reflects the impact on the individual of a morally unstable social ethos. Many college undergraduates are becoming increasingly aware of the pervasive relativism of our times, and the more thoughtful are deeply concerned to know what to believe, and how to live their lives as responsible individuals.

It is not strange that, in times like this, when men crave spiritual assurance and anchorage, there should be a resurgence of authoritarianism and of impassioned evangelical fervor. Yet many of us find it impossible to accept any authoritarian dogma; the relativistic critique of authoritarianism is too compelling. The convinced liberal who would save his soul and find a social cause worthy of his support must try to find a middle ground between extreme authoritarianism, on the one hand, and nihilistic relativism, on the other. He must somehow be able to believe, with complete integrity, in an objective Good and in man's ability to discern and commit himself to this Good without subscribing to the authoritarian claim, in whatever form, to *infallible* moral insight. May it not be that the Good is objective and real, and that man can, in principle, apprehend it without fully comprehending it—that we *can*, as Paul insists, see, though only “through a glass, darkly”? May it not be that authentic moral insight, though never

infallible or complete, is nevertheless possible and susceptible of cultivation and refinement? Is it possible that man's moral experiences, however diverse, can give us a reliable clue to the reality and structure of the Good, that conscience, however socially and temperamentally conditioned, can nonetheless lead us in the direction of ever greater moral understanding and virtue? In short, is what might be called a critical (non-nihilistic) moral relativism, rooted in a verifiable moral faith, possible and defensible?

This is the issue, so very relevant to our times, to which Kant addressed himself in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Is there, he asked, a generic type of experience which differs in kind from man's perceptual and scientific experiences and which, if taken seriously, might provide us with clues to the reality and the nature of a noumenal world, that is, to a value dimension of Reality itself which transcends all phenomena? If so, what is the essential nature of this experience, which we entitle "moral," and what can we legitimately infer from it regarding man's moral nature and the object of his moral quest?

It is my thesis that Kant's inquiries in the areas of the good, the beautiful, and the holy were fruitful in direct proportion as he put to use the method and presuppositions of the first *Critique* and that they were unilluminating in proportion as he abandoned this method. This is why I have so carefully summarized his basic assumptions, argument, and conclusions in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. We must keep this position in mind as we recapitulate and assess his great ethical venture.

Kant's profound concern with moral issues was already evident in the first *Critique*. Even here his self-appointed task was not only to show how science is possible and to demonstrate the validity of scientific discovery, but also

to safeguard morality against the threat of what he called materialism, and what we in our day refer to as "scientism." There was found among Kant's papers after his death an eloquent passage which records his deep concern, as a mature thinker, for man's essential dignity and value as a human being.

*I am by disposition an enquirer. I feel the consuming thirst for knowledge, the eager unrest to advance ever further, and the delights of discovery. There was a time when I believed that this is what confers real dignity upon human life, and I despised the common people who know nothing. Rousseau has set me right. This imagined advantage vanishes. I learn to honor men, and should regard myself as of much less use than the common labourer, if I did not believe that my philosophy will restore to all men the common rights of humanity.**

Kant's chief claim to fame is his epoch-making *Critique of Pure Reason*, but, as a man, he was primarily a moralist; he never questioned the supreme importance of man's moral quest.

His approach to the problem of moral value and moral insight in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is identical with his approach to the problem of perceptual experience and scientific knowledge. He assumes that moral experience has its own generic uniqueness and its two distinctive poles, the subjective pole of the moral agent and the objective pole of "real" (coercive, orderly, and public) goodness. As in the first *Critique*, he starts with a careful

* *Fragmente aus dem Nachlasse, Werke* (Hartenstein), VIII, 624; quoted in translation by Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Macmillan, 1918), p. 578.

analysis of man's moral experience. He then explores, by means of "transcendental" inference, the freedom and responsibility of the moral agent. He also examines at length the nature of the objective Moral Law. Let us summarize his chief findings on each of these three topics.

The essence of man's moral experience, Kant firmly believes, is his sense of duty. He takes great pains carefully to distinguish this sense of duty from a sense of prudence. The latter, motivated by man's craving for pleasure and his impulse to avoid pain, is universal, useful for his physical survival and welfare, and therefore perfectly legitimate and proper. It differs in kind, however, from an authentic sense of duty or moral obligation. Prudence expresses itself in what Kant calls a "hypothetical" imperative: Do this, in order to achieve that! This imperative is optional and not absolutely obligatory because, though the prescribed means may be necessary for the attainment of the desired hedonistic end, the end can always be rejected without moral scruple. It may be that we must use these means *if* we wish to gain that end, but we can always freely renounce the end in view with complete moral propriety. Duty, in sharp contrast, expresses itself in what he calls the "categorical" imperative, which knows nothing of ifs and buts; it obligates us absolutely and unqualifiedly, whether or not we acknowledge this obligation and whether or not we act in accordance with it.

Kant is here in search of the one crucial factor in man's moral experience which is not only the essential kernel of authentic morality but is also universally present in the dictates of the moral conscience, however diverse these dictates may be in other respects. He seems to be saying, in effect: However various the mores of different cultures and the prescriptions of this or that individual conscience,

the most distinguishing mark of man as a human being is his sense of absolute moral obligation. In short, however much men differ in *what* they feel morally obligated to do, their sense of moral obligation is absolute, categorical, and not merely hypothetical. This sense of duty expresses itself voluntaristically in what Kant calls "good will," which he carefully defines as the determination to do one's duty (as one sees it), not for any extrinsic reward, even the loftiest, but "for duty's sake." It is this abstract or formal analysis of duty which has impelled many subsequent philosophers to call Kant's ethics formalistic.

So far, Kant is, I believe, on firm ground. His insight into this crucial aspect of man's moral experience is profound. But he is not content to stop here. He feels impelled to take at least one step in the direction of content. The categorical imperative enjoins us, he says, always to treat persons (including oneself) as "ends in themselves" and never merely as "means," as beings for mere exploitation. His complementary formulation of the categorical imperative follows as a logical corollary: Never make an exception of yourself by doing what you would not approve having anyone else do under similar circumstances. These two formulations are summed up in a third: Do everything in your power to promote the "kingdom of ends"—that type of community in which all men respect one another and themselves as beings of intrinsic worth.

This is Kant's resolute effort to define what he believed to be the minimal and irreducible content of universal morality. Many moralists object that the content to which he points is too meager and general to be meaningful and morally helpful. But the question he might put to them is this: What further moral injunction is universally acknowledged by all morally sensitive men in all ages and

cultures? Other moralists believe that Kant has already gone too far, since even this recognition of man's basic dignity is, they insist, by no means universal in all cultures and historical epochs. This objection may be valid. We must remember that Kant, living in the eighteenth century, was not as aware as we are of the tremendous diversity of historical and cultural values. He might still insist, however, that it is not his task to explore such cultural discrepancies or to defend as universally *valid* only what in fact is universally *prevalent* in the entire sweep of human experience. He is trying, rather, to answer the question: What does it mean to be a really responsible moral agent? What is involved in being really human? Human infants are young animals, only potentially morally responsible; so, perhaps, are very primitive peoples. We must give societies time to mature, morally as in other ways, as we give our children time to mature. Man's full stature can be appreciated only in its mature development, never merely in terms of its origins and its immature ventures. After all, Kant is a philosopher, not a cultural anthropologist; his task is to discover and formulate the full essence of morality, not mankind's multiple deviations therefrom.

Kant next addresses himself to the nature of the moral agent. What here most impresses him is the absolute dependence of duty upon freedom. Duty differs essentially from hedonistic desire, as we have seen; it also differs radically from a sense of compulsion, *whatever* the nature and source of this compulsion. This is notoriously true of all external social pressures. We may have to yield to them or else pay a heavy price; but we do not respect them on that account, or feel morally obligated to conform to them, any more than we respect, or feel moral obligation toward, physical forces which may be powerful enough to destroy

us. By "freedom" Kant therefore means, first of all, freedom from natural causality, particularly as such causality is operative within ourselves as psycho-physical beings. He also means by freedom our moral right not to conform to the mores of one's society if these mores seem to us to violate our inner sense of duty. But freedom for Kant is even more than this. It is man's radical freedom, that is, his absolute autonomy, even in relation to an omnipotent and just Deity. True morality, he believes, is as hostile to slavish subservience to God as it is to subservience to society or nature.

This freedom, Kant argues, is the *ratio essendi*, the essential condition, of moral obligation. How can I be morally obligated to do what I am not absolutely free to do or to refrain from doing? Our sense of duty, in turn, is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom, since it alone can enable us to *know* that we are free; to be morally responsible we *must* be free.

How, then, is such freedom possible or intelligible? Were our natures entirely phenomenal, they would be wholly subject to the causal laws which are universally operative in the phenomenal world. Our moral experience, however, suffices, Kant believes, to convince us that we are not merely phenomena, but that, as human and therefore moral beings, we possess, each of us, an additional nature or essence. To be moral we must be free, and to be free we must participate in the realm or dimension of freedom, that is, in noumenal reality.

Here at last we have Kant's affirmative answer to the question posed by "reason" in the first *Critique*, the question for which no positive answer was forthcoming in that *Critique*. It is man's moral experience which, taken seriously, provides us with the necessary clue to the existence

and the nature of those farther reaches of Reality which in the first *Critique* he prophetically entitled "noumenal."

But what can we know about the noumenal world in addition to the fact that it is the realm of moral freedom and responsibility? How can it ensure freedom? Stated otherwise, what is the nature of the "object" of moral insight and of an enlightened moral conscience?

Kant's answer to these questions is clear and impressive. The noumenal realm is *in its own way* as orderly, coercive, and public as is the phenomenal world. Its distinctive law is the Moral Law, and it is this Law which man apprehends in his most profound moral insights. It is that higher rationality which man's "moral reason" (that is, the reason which in the first *Critique* functioned "speculatively" in its envisagement of the "whole," and which now in the second *Critique* is put to moral or "practical" use) discerns in moments of moral vision. It is what evokes man's highest spontaneous loyalty, and what impels him to formulate and obey the categorical imperative. Because man's own nature is noumenal, as well as phenomenal, this Moral Law is not alien to him or imposed upon him from without; it is the law of his own highest nature. He is therefore free to obey it without *any* external compulsion, finite or divine. But this same Moral Law is the Law of all rational beings. The essential nature of all men is noumenal—that is, all men possess, however latently, the germ of moral reason. It is this moral reason alone which entitles all men to respect and which endows them with intrinsic and indestructible value. We dare not exploit them or use them merely as means to our own ends because of their noumenal character and hence their potential membership in the ideal kingdom of ends. God Himself is worthy of our respect, not because of His power but

because He, too, as the supreme rational Being, acknowledges the Moral Law and conforms to it.

Man's moral life is thus seen to be a perpetual struggle of his phenomenal and noumenal natures for dominance. The noumenal seeks, as it were, ingress into the phenomenal; in man, moral reason seeks to overcome the seductions of mere prudence and to substitute duty for pleasure or at least to subordinate the latter to the former. Phenomena seem both to resist and to be amenable to noumenal permeation and control. Man's phenomenal self will fight the dictates of moral reason, but it can be subdued by man's will, provided the will is "good"—is dedicated, as it can and should be, to "duty for duty's sake." There is no dynamic power in the universe to which man can turn for help in this moral struggle, but man can and ought to save himself by his own moral efforts. The Moral Law is cold and impersonal; it knows nothing of sacrificial love, and takes no initiative to further man's salvation. But it can evoke the absolute loyalty of man as a free and autonomous agent, and this loyalty and dedication can convert man from the "radical evil" of his phenomenal involvements and from his innate craving for pleasure. Noumenal reality can thus, through man, manifest itself increasingly in the phenomenal world. Phenomenal events can, on man's initiative, take on moral meaning and purpose. This is man's proper destiny on earth.

What Kant has here developed is, of course, a radical dualism, both cosmic and human: a dualism of phenomena and noumena, and of man's phenomenal and noumenal natures. It is not this dualism as such, however, but Kant's account of the two components, particularly as they manifest themselves in man, that causes him trouble.

How, in the first place, can one and the same person be

simultaneously obedient to the regularities of both phenomena and noumena, even though his two natures enable him to participate in both realms? How can man, as a psycho-physical being, be wholly subject to the compulsions of phenomenal causality, as Kant insists he is, and still be able to act, as Kant says he can and ought to act, in obedience to the Moral Law? The solution of this problem, about which philosophers have argued since Kant's time, hinges on how causality, on the one hand, and noumenal impregnation of the phenomenal, on the other hand, are conceived in his philosophy.

Whenever Kant conceives of causal laws as dynamic, as he frequently does in the first *Critique*, the tyranny of causal force becomes inescapable and precludes all voluntary choice and morally responsible action. But Kant himself suggests, in other portions of the first *Critique*, that causality had better be regarded, not as dynamic force, but merely as the *emergent regularity* of all phenomenal behavior. Here he suggests that natural law is not imposed upon phenomena, forcing their conformity, but is, rather, the pattern of regularity which becomes apparent as all phenomena behave spontaneously in accordance with their own essential natures. This interpretation of causality, which Whitehead has developed more explicitly in his philosophy,* ascribes to all individual phenomena, including human beings, the capacity for spontaneous action in accordance with their own natures. If man's phenomenal nature is thus interpreted, it would seem plausible that his noumenal nature might express itself in and through his phenomenal attitudes and behavior.

Kant's problem would also be eased, if not completely

* Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933).

solved, if his "noumenal reality" were conceived of, not as another "world" which competes, so to speak, with the phenomenal "world" for man's allegiance, but rather (to use another metaphor) as the dimension or quality of moral value with which man can, with appropriate moral effort, impregnate his own character and behavior. On this view, man's moral task is not to combat or resist phenomenal causality in his efforts to be moral. It is rather his task to envisage objective moral value so clearly and to cherish it with such loyalty that it will, in fact, express itself increasingly in his motivations and actions.

We do not today believe that logical thinking does violence to the basic laws of psychology. Logical and illogical thinking are equally conformable to the orderliness of psychological processes. But in logical thinking something is *added* which mere psychology can neither explain nor explain away. What is added is the dimension or quality of logical consistency which endows some of our mental processes with a positive value which illogical or inconsistent thinking lacks. Here fact and value, though significantly different, are not in conflict; psychological fact becomes permeated by the value of logical consistency.

Kant's moral values can be related to psycho-physical fact in the same way. The "good will" which he so highly prizes is still man's human will which conforms to all the phenomenal regularities to which the human will is subject. It becomes "good," not by violating the phenomenal laws of volition, but by allegiance to an objective Moral Law as the object of its dominant motivation. Similarly, "respect" for all men as beings of intrinsic value is not a psychological miracle, because man is by nature prone to value certain things and not to value others. Moral respect is the *kind* of evaluation that is appropriate to human

nature and that expresses a crucial and distinctive quality which men possess as human beings and which they can and should honor in all men as men.

Here we are admittedly reinterpreting Kant's account of the noumena. We are not contradicting his own statements, but we are restating them in terms of the modern concept of "value" which was not available to Kant in the eighteenth century. This interpretation of the noumenal world as the dimension of value has the great additional merit of enabling us presently, in our discussion of man's aesthetic experience and its object, to extend Kant's concept of noumena to include aesthetic value or beauty as he himself is unwilling to do.

Kant's dualism also causes him embarrassment because of his sharp dichotomy between virtue and happiness. He is, I believe, fully justified in distinguishing man's sense of duty from his desire for pleasure. He makes the mistake, however, of defining pleasure in exclusively phenomenal terms, as the satisfaction of man's psycho-physical needs and impulses. He also tends to conceive of happiness merely as an aggregate of pleasures and the absence of pains. His account of virtue, in turn, makes no provision for any distinctive satisfaction intrinsic to virtue; he conceives of virtue, in Puritanical fashion, as not accompanied by its own intrinsic rewards. This forces him, in turn, to conclude that, in this life, virtue and happiness are, more often than not, disproportionate. Many a virtuous man, he believes, is more virtuous than happy in this life. This reflection impels him to ask whether we can really believe that we are living in a just or moral universe if somehow, in the long run, virtue and happiness are not perfectly equated. He is not arguing belatedly that a man of virtue should insist on the reward of proportionate happiness

for himself, for this would involve his failure to give priority to duty over pleasure. Kant still insists that "duty for duty's sake" must be the one and only motive of moral endeavor. His present argument is that a man of virtue is a man who must believe in justice and that such a man, if forced to doubt ultimate cosmic justice, will lapse into a cynicism which may well undermine his sense of duty and cut the nerve of serious moral endeavor. We must therefore, he believes, have faith in a *Summum Bonum*, that is, a final just equivalence of virtue and happiness, if we are to take our moral experience seriously and to continue in our struggles for virtue.

Kant is also persuaded that, though the Moral Law obligates us to be *perfectly* virtuous, it is probably impossible for any finite mortal to achieve such perfect virtue during his life on earth. Cosmic justice must surely provide man with the opportunity to acquire, after death, the perfect virtue which he has failed to attain on earth. We must therefore "postulate" immortality for two independently sufficient reasons: first, to permit man to continue his efforts to achieve perfect virtue, and second, to enable cosmic justice—the perfect balancing of virtue and happiness—to prevail.

But cosmic justice, as Kant conceives of it, is not itself a vital force. As we have seen, even the Moral Law is undynamic; it can evoke man's loyalty, but it is quite incapable of judging men after death and equating virtue and happiness and thus actualizing the *Summum Bonum*. Kant is therefore compelled to introduce his second famous "postulate"—the reality of a Divine Being who has both the power and the justice to reward men after death with the happiness which their virtue calls for. This is Kant's well-known moral "proof" of God's existence. He himself

never regards his arguments in support of immortality and God as rigorous "proofs"; he carefully entitles them "postulates." They are man's most plausible answers to questions which cannot be answered with finality. We do not know enough to validate them with logically coercive proofs. But neither can we dismiss these questions as idle or wholly unanswerable. We must devise the best answers we can, and accept them in a spirit of reasonable moral assurance. In this respect Kant's "postulates" somewhat resemble Plato's myths. They are offered, not as assured philosophical doctrines, but as our most enlightened imaginative ventures into a region whose precise nature remains partly hidden and obscure. We must believe in *something like* this if we are to preserve our moral assurance and integrity.

We cannot pause for an adequate critique of Kant's account of the *Summum Bonum*, God, and immortality; a brief summary criticism must suffice. It is surely obvious that the God here postulated is not the God of religious worship. He is, rather, a metaphysical entity which Kant introduced as a *deus ex machina* to get him out of his philosophical predicament. God is invented by Kant to perform a specific function—to serve (as A. Seth Pringle-Pattison once put it) as a Divine Paymaster. He never becomes for Kant a Being of holiness and sacrificial redemptive love who evokes our responsive awe, gratitude, love, and obedience. He is no more than a dynamic personification of cosmic justice. Kant also violates his own injunction never to use rational beings merely as means, for God's one and only function and value, as Kant describes Him, is to implement the principle of justice. It is equally obvious that the happiness which it is God's function to distribute to men after death in proportion to

their acquired virtue is a happiness which, as Kant conceives of happiness, is offered them after they are no longer able to enjoy it. Kant never refers to happiness save in phenomenal terms—as essentially associated with man's psycho-physical nature and his capacity for pleasure. Yet, at death, we presumably slough off this mortal coil; it is our noumenal, not our phenomenal, nature which persists in a state of immortality. What is required is clearly a doctrine of happiness or beatitude which the immortal part of us can enjoy, and there is in Kant no significant hint of such a doctrine.

The source of all these difficulties in Kant is twofold. Despite his brilliant ethical insights and analyses, Kant's understanding of man's moral experience is seriously deficient. He was too rigorous a Puritan, too rationalistic and legalistic in his approach to moral value, to do justice to the compelling warmth and the intrinsic satisfactions of man's moral life at its mature and imaginative best. He had little or no appreciation of that love for persons, that complete acceptance of them in all their uniqueness and with all their faults, which a deeper moral insight would value more highly than mere "respect" and mere impersonal justice. Kant also seems to have had no inkling of what, even in a secular perspective, might be called the "peace that passeth all understanding" which men of notable compassion and humility have found to be the natural accompaniment of complete moral dedication.

What we actually find in Kant is a secularized version of Christian ethics. For the God of righteous and redemptive love he substitutes the impersonal Moral Law as the proper focus of man's ultimate loyalty. He conceives of man as possessing dignity and value, not as the child of God created in His image (and therefore capable

of loving and obedient response to Him), but as an autonomous being who is endowed with moral reason and a capacity for duty. He ascribes to man, not the God-given freedom of uncoerced conformity to God's will, but the freedom of a radical autonomy for which he is not beholden to nature, society, or God Himself. Kant has a profound sense of sin as moral corruption and as our ineradicable human tendency to disobey the Moral Law, but he has no conception of sin as estrangement from and repudiation of God—as idolatry in its infinite varieties. The only salvation he believes in is the salvation which man himself, by his own unaided effort, can and should achieve for himself; he explicitly repudiates the religious concept of Divine forgiveness and redemption. The only heavenly reward he is willing to postulate is the individual happiness which God eventually doles out in just recompense for individual merit. The Kingdom of God is radically transformed into a Godless kingdom of ends, the apotheosis of an ideally moral human community. Above all, Kant substitutes strict impartial justice for what the Hebraic-Christian tradition describes as the gift of utterly selfless sacrificial love which does not destroy justice but transcends it as the Great Commandment transcends and fulfills the Ten Commandments.

This is not offered as a theologically oriented critique of a secular ethic. It is offered, rather, as a summary comment on Kant's ethical rigorism and as a historically valid explanation of its source in his own cultural background. Kant's father was a man whose great moral integrity Kant always profoundly respected; he also respected his mother but found himself, early in life, unsympathetic to her evangelical pietism, and he was revolted by the sanctimonious piety which he encountered as a boy in the school

to which his mother sent him. This school experience left him embittered for life with organized religion; henceforth, he had no interest in orthodox Christian theology. Modeling himself on his self-reliant father rather than his church-going mother, he quite naturally came to value the moral component of Christianity far above its ecclesiastic rites and its theological doctrines. He never went to church and resented the ringing of church bells as an unwarranted intrusion by the godly upon the privacy of the unchurched. He never seems to have studied theology as he did science and philosophy. When, as an old man, he got ready to write his book on religion he reread the catechism which he had studied as a boy and then proceeded to translate the Christian doctrines as he understood them into ethical doctrines which harmonized with his own ethical system. In short, he quite deliberately secularized Christian ethics into a strictly humanistic ethics, preserving what he felt to be of abiding value in historical Christianity and discarding as superfluous and superstitious all religious mystery and awe and all the distinctive doctrines of Christian theology. We shall revert to Kant's treatment of religion in our discussion of religious faith.

Kant's moral philosophy must, indeed, be judged to be very inadequate in Christian perspective, but it is also inadequate when assessed in the light of secular man's most profound moral insights. One does not need to be a Christian, or even to be religiously oriented and committed, to realize that love in its highest human form not only encompasses but transcends and transforms justice, that men most deeply need and crave not only respect but the understanding and acceptance of love, and that this love is the source of a redemption and strength, a purification and joy, which cold impersonal justice and scrupu-

lous respect can never generate. However searching Kant's insight into the human heart with its enduring capacity for good and its inextirpable proclivity to evil, however valuable his emphasis on moral reason, and however passionate his ultimate allegiance to justice, his ethical theory fails to express a profound humanism at its imaginative best.

Our chief concern in this Essay is, as we have said, to find in Kant's philosophy, if we can, a clue to a method of inquiry which we today can put to honest and effective use in our search for a vital faith in objective values and in a God of religious worship. We have summarized the method which Kant formulated and put to work in the area of sense perception and science in the first *Critique*. It should now be clear that Kant uses this same basic method in the second *Critique*. He starts with the total configuration of a moral agent responding to the Moral Law. He then proceeds to explore the three components of this configuration: man's moral experience, man himself as a moral self, and the Moral Law as the noumenal object of his moral quest and loyalty. Whatever the deficiencies of Kant's more specific ethical doctrines, his method is not only valid and fruitful but provides abundant room for a more profound understanding of the dynamics and the content of morality than he himself was able to achieve.

It must be said, in all honesty, that Kant never explicitly applies his threefold characterization of the "objectively" real to the noumenal realm or to the Moral Law. Indeed, he himself conscientiously refuses to claim that man's moral insights constitute "knowledge" or that the ethical propositions which he so confidently accepts are "true." "Knowledge" and "truth," strictly defined, are, for him,

restricted to man's understanding of phenomena. He insists on referring to man's deepest moral assurances as expressions of "faith," not as items of "knowledge." He offers us his analysis of morality, not as a formally valid proof of his ethical conclusions, but rather as a demonstration of how such a moral faith can be both enlightened and reasonable.

It is at this point that I would defend a neo-Kantian approach. Why should we not apply the method of the first *Critique* rigorously and without apology to man's moral insights and their object? Does not this "object"—that is, the Moral Law as the essence of noumenal reality—possess, for the morally sensitive person, all three of the characteristics which in combination serve to define "objectivity" in the phenomenal realm?

The Moral Law is, firstly, absolutely coercive for the moral consciousness—so coercive, on Kant's own analysis, that it dictates the categorical imperative from which no man can escape, however much he may transgress it. It is, indeed, coercive in a moral manner—it obligates without compelling. But this is precisely the nature of ideal values. They evoke our loyalty; and the greater our loyalty, the more intense and categorical our sense of moral obligation becomes. Ideal values, like phenomenal facts, have a character of their own which we can more or less discern and which we disregard only at our peril. Kant is perfectly well aware that we can and do "break" the Moral Law; but when we do so, we do violence to our own moral nature. The Moral Law can never be disregarded or disobeyed with impunity.

Secondly, the noumenal world of value, as apprehended by man's moral consciousness, is orderly and regular. What moral insight reveals is a *Moral Law*, not a mystical

vacuum or chaos. It is this order which dictates constant respect for all rational beings as such, which forbids all exceptions in favor of oneself, and which is consummated in the ideal kingdom of ends, the community of orderly freedom, which we are enjoined to make our ultimate corporate objective.

Thirdly, the Moral Law, and all that it entails, is, on Kant's own showing, public and universally available to all men—indeed, to all rational beings, whether finite or Divine. It is, in very essence, the *same* Law for all, however seriously it be ignored or misconstrued. Kant knows nothing of a wholly private morality or of an ideosyncratic conscience. Every man's conscience, he believes, dictates the same duty for duty's sake, the same respect for all men, the same quest for the kingdom of ends.

What more can moral values be to be genuinely "objective" and "real?" Once and for all, values are not sensory data or sensory objects. The moral scepticism of scientism is valid only if its dogmatic premises are valid—if the *only* primary data for authentic knowledge are sensory. If our empirical criterion is purely sensory, values must indeed remain unknown because we cannot see, smell, taste, feel, or hear them. But if we acknowledge, as Kant does, that man's value experiences, and specifically his moral sense, constitute a generic type of experience worthy of being taken seriously as a source of real clues to objective moral values, it is hard to see why moral values, at least, are not as objective and real in their way as phenomena are in theirs.

Kant's three complementary criteria of truth are no less applicable for testing the validity of alleged moral insights, though Kant himself never specifically subjects them to this test. Can we not say that a moral judgment is true or

morally valid in proportion: (a) as it satisfies the criterion of correspondence, that is, does justice to and conforms with man's innermost sense of duty and involves no violation of his deepest conscience; (b) as it is consistent with his other moral beliefs and appropriately complements them within a coherent frame of reference; and (c) as it is meaningful to other moral agents who, too, are morally sensitive, and thus conduces to a meeting of minds and hearts in a common loyalty?

As in science, so in morality, the final summary test of moral insight is pragmatic. The final test of modern science is that it "works"; witness modern technology in engineering and medicine. In the area of morality, that body of beliefs must be judged most true which most effectively enriches human life, which best promotes mutual respect and love, and which brings man a maximum of joy, peace, and spiritual strength.

Does this Kantian method, interpreted along these neo-Kantian lines, point us in the direction of a middle road between moralistic authoritarianism and a nihilistic moral relativism? It seems to me that it does so very clearly. It completely avoids all appeal to external authority, secular or religious. No thinker has ever safeguarded the sanctity of man's private conscience more completely than has Kant. He has also carefully avoided all casuistic legalism, and he has done his best to refrain from absolutizing any merely culturally conditioned moral standards or mores. His basic injunctions are as general as is the Aristotelian doctrine of the Mean, or the Great Commandment to love God first and our fellow men as ourselves. Kant leaves it to each individual to decide how to express his respect for his fellow men and for himself, how to avoid making invidious exceptions, and how to promote the kingdom of

ends. On the other hand, Kant does insist, in no uncertain terms, on the Moral Law as absolute. He completely refuses to reduce justice and moral value to its partial and incomplete phenomenal manifestations. He thus completely repudiates the scepticism of the radical moral relativist.

My only criticism of Kant, as an exponent of the middle road of "critical" relativism, is that he tends to absolutize his own formulations of the categorical imperative. I am myself persuaded that these formulations are excellent, as far as they go, and that they express, in a highly formal manner, a deep-seated disposition of all men, of whatever race or culture, to crave basic respect from others, to value justice as they conceive it, and to be responsive to a sense of duty or ultimate obligation. But Kant seems to claim for these moral prescriptions of his a finality and certainty comparable to the universality and certainty which he claims for the conclusions of his transcendental analysis in the first *Critique*. Both claims are, I believe, equally unjustifiable in the light of human finitude and the possibility of ever-new and more veridical insight. I would entitle Kant's findings authentic knowledge, rather than "faith"; but I would claim for them, not certainty, but a high degree of certitude or moral assurance, comparable, let us say, to some of the most assured findings of modern science. With this proviso, it seems reasonable to conclude that what Kant has given us is a method of inquiry which is indeed applicable in ethics and which, if we use it wisely, can lead us to ever greater (but never final or complete) insight into the noumenal realm of objective moral value. Our evaluations must, on this view, always be no more than re-creative approximations to absolute Value, our sense of justice no more than our best understanding

of absolute Justice. But we *are* justified in taking our best moral insights seriously, in the reasonable faith that there is an objective Justice or Goodness with a character of its own, and that we are so made that, with appropriate effort, we can make progress in apprehending it and actualizing it here on earth.

When Kant had concluded his account of phenomena and our knowledge of them, he asked himself, at the instigation of "speculative reason": Is that all? Is the phenomenal world the whole of reality? His official answer in the first *Critique* was, as we discovered, agnostic. He was able to justify his faith in an additional moral order, a further noumenal dimension, only after he had completed his analysis of man's moral experience. He does not, at the end of the second *Critique*, explicitly ask this same speculative question; but his analysis of man's aesthetic experience, in Part I of the *Critique of Judgment*, to which he immediately applied himself, is his own attempt to answer this very question. Let us follow him in this new venture and see whether his basic method of inquiry is, or can be made, as applicable here as it has proved to be in the realms of phenomenal fact and moral value.

4 *Aesthetic Insight and Artistic Expression*

When Kant undertook to analyze man's creation of, and response to, beauty, he moved into an area of human experience in which he was far less well equipped to deal with the relevant data than in the areas treated in the two previous *Critiques*. He gives little evidence in his aesthetic writings of great aesthetic appreciation or of a cultivated understanding of art. He never traveled; he saw at first-hand only such art as culturally bleak Königsberg in East Prussia could muster. He was for a while the curator of the museum in Königsberg, but he seems to have functioned more as a reliable custodian than as a discriminating col-

lector or art critic. The only picture we know to have been in his bachelor quarters was a portrait of Rousseau which he prized as the likeness of a man he greatly revered. The literary passages which he quotes with approval recommended themselves to him primarily because of the lofty moral sentiments which they expressed. He cites the Pyramids as outstanding examples of sublime art, chiefly, it would seem, because of their tremendous size. Indeed, he appears to judge all man-made beauty to be of less value than natural beauty because, as he puts it, a good soul cannot help being gratified to find that nature herself is thus disposed to satisfy man's aesthetic sense.

Kant apparently derived his understanding of the aesthetic realm mainly from his omnivorous reading (he lived for a while over a bookstore in order to be able to borrow books for his solitary evenings) and from his lifelong habit of inviting guests, preferably travelers, to join him in his midday meals. At these meals all philosophical argument was taboo; he insisted on general conversation on a wide variety of cultural topics and contemporary trends. From all this reading and talk he did somehow acquire an appreciation of aesthetic taste in some of its universal aspects, as well as of the chief characteristics of the artistic styles which we today call Baroque and Rococo, Neo-Classic and Romantic. He is not only aware of these styles; he exhibits an uncanny ability to appreciate their essential merits and defects as stylistic trends. His resultant aesthetic is therefore far more acute and, at times, profound, than one would have any right to expect from a man of his temperament and cultural background.*

* See T. M. Greene, "A Reassessment of Kant's Aesthetic Theory," in *The Heritage of Kant*, edited by G. T. Whitney and D. F. Bowers (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1939).

The struggle between authoritarianism and nihilistic relativism has, during the last two centuries, been as acute in aesthetics as in ethics. Authoritarianism has been defended, in a losing battle, by the Academics, who, in their attempt to safeguard art, have tended to enshrine and idolize the art of the past. Creative artists of original talent or genius have had to face formidable neglect or opposition in official academic quarters. Art critics, literary critics, historians, anthropologists, and philosophers of art have, on the whole, been the ones who questioned the universality of aesthetic taste and the very possibility of finding or formulating objectively valid standards for the assessment of works of art. Today most aestheticians and critics tend to be relativists, though their evaluations of specific works of art are usually offered as expert and responsible appraisals of aesthetic quality and artistic merit.

Here, as in ethics, we must look for a middle road between an authoritarianism which is destructive of original creativity and a relativism which, pushed to the limit, would reduce all art to the status of an aesthetically neutral stimulus and would deny the very possibility of responsible criticism of art and literature. Kant was acutely aware of this problem. It will be interesting to see how skillfully, up to a point, he steers a middle course between this aesthetic Scylla and Charybdis.

Kant focuses his attention, at the outset, not upon man's aesthetic experience as such, but upon its expression in what he calls the "judgment of taste." By the judgment of taste he does not mean what we today would call art and literary criticism. He has in mind, rather, the pure aesthetic component in experience—"pure taste" for "pure" beauty. His "judgment of taste" is the judgment, "This or

that is beautiful." His own analysis of this judgment is very discerning.

He first distinguishes the judgment of taste from all expressions of mere subjective preference of the form, "It pleases me." The latter does not pretend to judge aesthetically the "object" referred to, and therefore neither invites nor permits argument. If you prefer yellow to blue, or the taste of lemonade to the taste of orangeade, and if my preferences are the reverse of these, we *must* agree to differ, because neither of us can, in principle, justify his personal preference or criticize a different preference on *any* objective basis. Kant also sharply differentiates the judgment of taste from man's moral judgments. The latter, as he has shown, are the pronouncements of man's moral reason and are, if valid, rationally formulable and defensible. The judgment of taste, in contrast, can never be justified by an appeal to rational principles. No rules can be laid down for the creation of beauty or for its appraisal. In short, taste is unique and *sui generis*. It must never be confused, or identified, with man's expression of mere pleasure and mere subjective preference or, on the other hand, with man's responsible moral judgments.

Yet, paradoxically, Kant is (quite rightly) convinced that the judgment of taste does claim to be valid for all men and therefore equally universal and necessary for all. When I express a responsible judgment of taste I at least implicitly claim that I am right in my assessment—that my judgment is aesthetically valid or true, and that all conflicting assessments are invalid and false. I may of course be mistaken, but if I seriously assert, "This is beautiful," this assertion expresses my present conviction that I am not mistaken. Any judgment of taste which does reflect genuine aesthetic insight is, Kant insists, aestheti-

cally obligatory for all men of aesthetic sensitivity. Other men ought to accept and echo it, whether in fact they do so or not. The universality and necessity which are here insisted on are, of course, not the "universality" of actual agreement or the "necessity" of causal compulsion. The universality here invoked is an "imputed" universality, and the necessity in question is the necessity of *aesthetic* obligation. Men do not, in fact, agree in the area of taste any more than they agree in their other evaluations; but valid or correct aesthetic evaluations are in principle possible, and all men ought to accept all judgments of taste which are in fact correct. Any judgment of taste which is *really* valid is valid not only for me, or for men of a given culture and historical period; it is equally and universally valid for all men.

Kant is also shrewd in his description of the beauty which, in the judgment of taste, constitutes the "object" of taste. This beauty, he says, is always "purposive without the concept (or idea) of purpose." This phrase reflects a profound insight into the nature of beauty. As I interpret it, it calls attention, first, to a verifiable and very crucial characteristic of beauty, namely, that every part of an aesthetically satisfying configuration is "organically" related to every other part and to the configuration as a whole, so that each part makes its own essential aesthetic contribution to the total aesthetic effect. Each has its own distinctive aesthetic purpose; it is never aesthetically useless or purposeless. But, second, this aesthetic purposiveness can never be achieved, in artistic creation, by an appeal to aesthetic rules or principles. Its presence or absence, either in human artifacts or in nature, can never be discerned or proved by an appeal to such principles or rules, that is, to an "idea" or "concept" of purposiveness.

If we have aesthetic taste, we can sense or intuit the aesthetic rightness or usefulness of each component of the total aesthetic Gestalt, and if we have creative talent or genius, we can bring into being an aesthetic pattern all of whose parts or elements do in fact make their appropriate contributions to the aesthetic whole. But in neither case can we appeal to rationally formulated or formulable rules. Every instance of beauty has (to use a phrase which Kant did *not* employ) an "internal aesthetic logic" of its own which a discerning taste can detect and approve, and by which, in artistic creation, the artist is guided and disciplined in his own creative labors. But neither artist nor critic can prove by conceptual argument that this requirement has in fact been, or not been, satisfied in any specific instance. All beauty is, in this sense, "purposive without the idea of purpose." Its aesthetic components do stand in an "organic," mutually helpful, relation to one another, yet only for the discerning eye of the aesthetically sensitive creator or observer and never in a manner which conceptual logic can discern or test by an appeal to conceptual principles.

In this account of taste and its object Kant is very cleverly traveling a middle road between traditional academicism or neo-classic authoritarianism, on the one hand, and nihilistic aesthetic relativism, on the other. The famous dictum *de gustibus non disputandum est* is, he believes, both true and false, depending upon one's interpretation of it. If by taste is meant mere subjective preference, the dictum is patently true. But this is *not* the taste which expresses itself in responsible aesthetic judgment. *Aesthetic* taste *can* be right or wrong, valid or invalid. In this sense it *can* be "disputed," that is, questioned or challenged. But even aesthetic taste cannot be argued,

attacked, or defended in terms of conceptual logic or by an appeal to rules. Taste can, however, be cultivated; its judgments can claim validity; and the claim of validity can be tested and confirmed, modified, or rejected by other men of cultivated taste. In this sense taste is "disputable" and meaningfully controversial as mere subjective preference never is. Kant's account of taste, and of beauty as its object, is, I believe, correct and illuminating up to this point.

Kant's parallel account of aesthetic creativity is, as far as it goes, no less valid and enlightening. He believes that man-made beauty is, in its lesser forms, the product of "talent" and, at its best, the product of creative "genius." He explains both talent and genius as the activity of man's faculty of imagination—not of the reproductive imagination invoked in the first *Critique* to explain memory (man's ability to revive sensory perceptions in the form of sensory images), but of the "productive" or creative imagination which both Coleridge and Ruskin, for example, stress in their accounts of artistic creation. Genius, as we have seen, functions without rules—without primary reliance upon conceptualized formulae. Rather, genius creates what Kant calls "aesthetical ideas" for which no logical concepts are adequate. Creative genius can, indeed, learn from and be inspired by other works of genius, but it can do so only by regarding such works, not as models to be "imitated," but as "exemplary" products of the genius of others. A creative artist will lapse into uninspired and uncreative "mannerism" if he slavishly imitates the successful creations of others, or even his own earlier creations. What he should do, rather, is to expose himself to these works as his prime source of stimulation and inspiration and as "exemplary" instances of past success-

ful creativity. After such repeated and receptive exposure he must rely on his own productive imagination and his own capacity for genuine originality. He must solve his own necessarily unique aesthetic problems solely in terms of the internal aesthetic logic of each specific work of art as it comes into being, evolves, and completes itself in his hands.

Here again Kant is wisely steering a careful middle course between mere undisciplined novelty and uninspired conformity, between an untutored "romantic" ebullience, on the one hand, and mere obedient academic correctness, on the other. What he recommends and values is a disciplined originality which makes proper use of past artistic achievement and which avoids the opposite extremes of untutored naïveté and pedantic correctness or conformity to arbitrary aesthetic canons.

It follows that taste and genius, as Kant has defined them, are essentially different but mutually dependent. Genius, as such, creates beauty but is incapable of assessing or judging the beauty which it has created. Taste is not itself creative, yet it alone is able to appreciate and judge beauty. The man of taste need not himself be creative. His only task is to respond to the works of genius (or lesser talent) with a cultivated aesthetic sensitivity, and to assess beauty, whether in nature or in art, with responsible discernment. The creative artist, in contrast, must have both genius (or talent) and taste. He must be able to create new original aesthetic forms; but, in the process of creation, he must also be able to assess his own work as it progresses. He must know whether each step is, or is not, aesthetically satisfactory; and, at the end, he must know whether he has in fact realized the full aesthetic potentialities of the specific work of art before him—

whether he has made it as beautiful in its own unique way as it is capable of becoming. The creative artist must also possess taste to pick out the works of other artists which he can accept as "exemplary" or worthy of his discriminating study. Both genius and taste are thus, for Kant, essential, in complementary ways, in the total aesthetic transaction.

These are Kant's chief contributions to aesthetic theory. It would be easy, but hardly profitable, to review his occasional comments on specific works of art and literature and to exhibit their critical inadequacy. Such a critique would, in fact, be unfair to Kant because he never set himself up as an art or literary critic and never pretended to concern himself primarily with works of art as such. His dominant interest is, from first to last, in the aesthetic component in its purity, wherever it appears. He discusses "pure" taste, not criticism; "pure" beauty, not artistically expressive beauty. This is why he praises sea shells and arabesques; he values them, not as instances of natural sublimity or of great art, but as notable instances of pure beauty and therefore as ideal objects of pure taste. This is, no doubt, a limited approach to the total aesthetic problem, but it is certainly a valid and very important approach. His findings within this frame of reference are, I believe, of enduring value.

I must, however, criticize him very sharply for one major aesthetic doctrine which falls entirely within his own frame of reference. I refer to Kant's insistence that beauty is "subjective" and not "objective." This doctrine does violence not only to our aesthetic experience; it undercuts what Kant himself has said about this experience. Above all, it violates a basic presupposition of that basic method

of inquiry which he used so brilliantly in the first *Critique* and so effectively in the second *Critique*.

We may recall that, in the first *Critique*, Kant insists on starting, *not* with the process of experience in radical isolation from its subject and as radically detached from and independent of the object of the experience in question, but with the *total* configuration of knower-knowing-the knowable, or subject-process-object. In the second *Critique* this basic methodological formula takes the form: moral agent (free and responsible); moral experience (of duty); object of moral reason (the Moral Law as the law of the noumenal world). Had Kant been consistent with himself in his present venture into the realm of aesthetic value, he would have started with the same formula: either in the form of genius-creating-beauty, or in the complementary form of critic (man of taste)-judging-beauty. He does, as we have seen, discuss the processes of creation and aesthetic judgment, and he does, in both cases, work *back* to what must be ascribed to the subjective poles—to the creative and the judging agents—in order to explain, or make sense of, the processes in question. But he perversely refuses to follow his own precedent as regards the aesthetic object, considered either as the product of aesthetic genius or talent, or as the object to which taste responds and which it assesses. In describing both taste and creativity he feels obliged to talk about beauty *as though* it were real—the real product of artistic creation and the real object of aesthetic taste. But when he comes to a head-on discussion of beauty, he flatly denies its “objective reality,” either in art or nature.

How did Kant arrive at this unpredictable conclusion? Why did he deny to beauty the “objectivity” which he ascribed to sensory phenomena and, with due provisos, to

the Moral Law? The answer is not far to seek. He did so because beauty, unlike phenomena in their way and the Moral Law in its way, is not characterized by the *kind* of order which man's intellect—either his “understanding” or his “moral reason”—can grasp and formulate conceptually. He had previously insisted that phenomena are “objective,” not only because they possess a coercive public order of their own but also because the understanding can grasp this order and express it in terms of basic, universally applicable categories and of specific scientific laws. He had also defended our moral faith in the Moral Law, not only because it presents itself to all men as coercive and universal but also because man's moral reason can apprehend it and formulate its behests in terms of the categorical imperative. Beauty, however, is characterized by an order or purposiveness which, though no less coercive or compelling to man's aesthetic taste, is wholly unique in every instance and hence not amenable to universal rules or principles which an “aesthetic reason” might formulate conceptually. Despite his earlier criticism of eighteenth century rationalism, Kant remains enough of a rationalist to feel obligated, therefore, to deny that beauty is objective.

Kant's difficulty can be restated in terms of the judgment of taste. He has shown that scientific judgments about phenomena can be tested in terms of the three criteria which we have labeled correspondence, coherence, and communicability. Of these three, coherence is the conceptual criterion of truth. It demands conceptual consistency and the absence of contradiction among the beliefs we accept as valid. It can be applied, in science, by an explicit reference to the laws and principles in terms of which we conceive of natural order. We must either re-

ject, as unreal or non-objective, any alleged event which does not conform to our understanding of the laws of nature, or, alternatively, we must revise our account of these laws. We have argued that this same criterion of coherence, translated into the terms of moral reason, can and should be used to test the validity of our alleged moral insights. Kant himself makes implicit use of this criterion in his threefold formulation and defense of the categorical imperative. The judgment of taste, however, does not seem to be amenable to this criterion of conceptual coherence, for it is not subject to any conceptually formulated rules or principles. Just as every instance of beauty is unique, so is every judgment of taste unique or singular. A judgment of taste is never a specific application of universal rules but always the expression of a unique immediate aesthetic intuition or insight. Beauty cannot therefore be regarded as objective, because our assessments of it cannot be tested by the conceptual processes we invoke in testing our scientific and moral judgments.

Kant has said that all instances of beauty are characterized by "purposiveness without the idea of purpose," and we have interpreted this curious phrase to mean that every instance of beauty has a unique "internal logic" of its own. But Kant himself never used the term "logic" in this way, and he would certainly have objected to this use of the term. Logic, he believed, necessarily signifies the applicability of concepts or principles to all relevant instances. This is precisely why, in his view, the judgment of taste is *not* logical and why it cannot, in principle, be tested for validity or truth.

Kant's denial that the imputed validity of the judgment of taste can be rationally tested or verified, and that beauty is truly objective, causes him grave embarrassment, for how

can he justify his own insistence upon the universality and necessity of taste? His own answer is ingenious but quite inadequate. Taste, he says, reflects a type of experience which, on analysis, is found to be a kind of heightened and sharpened sense perception. The latter, as he has made clear in the first *Critique*, involves the cooperation of the faculties of imagination and understanding. In the aesthetic experience, whether its object be a human artifact or a natural object, these same faculties are stimulated into unusually harmonious activity, and the feeling of this unusual harmony expresses itself in the emergent judgment of taste. This explanation has the great merit of not depending upon the invention of a new *ad hoc* faculty to explain a new kind of experience. What Kant completely fails to do, however, is to explain *why* these familiar faculties of imagination and understanding are occasionally stimulated into such unusually harmonious activity if nothing in the object apprehended is capable of providing the requisite stimulus. The obvious explanation, surely, is that some perceptual objects do themselves *possess* a pattern or structure which is especially congenial to man's perceptual or cognitive capacity, and that it is precisely this special structural quality or type of Gestalt which constitutes their beauty. In short, beauty must be, on Kant's own analysis, a tertiary quality which characterizes some perceptual objects far more than it does other perceptual objects and which *is* the quality, whether in nature or art, which taste discerns and approves. Perceptual objects which make no pretense to such quality are aesthetically neutral; those which, in whatever way, profess to have this quality but which, in fact, lack it, or violate it, are, in varying degrees, ugly.

It would seem clear, then, that Kant's own analysis of

taste forces us to conclude that beauty, and its opposite, ugliness, are, and must be, the proper objects of taste and its necessary referents, and that such beauty and ugliness *are* objectively real in some meaningful and definable sense. Can their reality or objectivity be justified in terms of, or at least in a manner consistent with, Kant's own account of objectivity in the first *Critique*?

Our problem is, I believe, capable of solution if we carefully distinguish between: (a) Kant's account of the essential hallmarks of objectivity and (b) his insistence upon the invocation of conceptual rules or principles. I would argue, in neo-Kantian fashion, that beauty, as Kant has described it, *does* possess the necessary characteristics of objectivity because it does, in all its instances, possess a pattern, order, form, or Gestalt which is both aesthetically coercive (for the man of taste) and universally available (to all men of taste). This is true despite the fact that every specific instance of beauty is unique and therefore necessarily the object of a singular judgment of taste. I would then argue, in opposition to Kant, that the judgment of taste *is* testable—not, indeed, by an appeal to conceptualized rules or principles, but by an appeal to man's cultivated taste. What is here invoked is man's ability to sensitize and discipline his innate capacity for aesthetic taste and thus to acquire a developed appreciation of beauty in any of its manifold appearances. Kant has himself, in the second *Critique*, substituted moral reason for the understanding as the crucial faculty of moral insight. Why is it not legitimate for us, in our account of man's aesthetic insights, to invoke another cognitive capacity—aesthetic taste or “reason”—as the subjective source of the distinctive insight here in question?

This neo-Kantian interpretation implies that a Gestalt,

or orderly pattern, can be both unique and objective. Is this a fatal contradiction? Kant believes it is. But if we cling to Kant's *basic* account of objectivity as involving coercive public order, any instance of beauty *can* be correctly described as objective because it is always characterized by such coercive public order. Its uniqueness does preclude the possibility of assessing it by the application of universal rules. But why should we not simply admit that beauty possesses the *kind* of authentic objectivity which *can* be assessed by the cultivated taste of the disciplined connoisseur? Need we, in short, subscribe to Kant's inflexible rationalistic reliance on conceptual principles in our analysis of man's aesthetic experience? Does not the distinctive character of this experience suggest the need for a greater flexibility?

The unique formal patterns which constitute beauty in all its specific instances do, of course, tend to resemble one another in various ways. They can, therefore, be roughly classified as more or less deviant examples of this or that generic form. But Kant is right in his implicit recognition that the aesthetic value of beauty, whether in art or nature, is never reducible to its conformity to such generic aesthetic forms. Every instance of beauty has aesthetic merit by virtue of the uniqueness of its formal pattern, its *own* internal aesthetic "logic," its unreduplicable inner purposiveness. It is my neo-Kantian thesis that we are fully justified in defining the distinctive objectivity of beauty in terms of its singular uniqueness, and that we need not, and should not, deny that beauty is objective merely because it refuses to submit itself to a conceptualized "idea" or rule. Beauty, like phenomenal fact and moral value, does present itself to us as objectively real because it forces itself upon our awareness

with an orderly character of its own which, whether we like it (as beautiful) or not (as ugly), must be accepted for what it is and judged "objectively" by our cultivated taste.

It may still be objected that a "cultivated" taste is, after all, merely the result of a cultural and historical conditioning process whereby the aesthetic taste of an individual is made more or less to conform to the prevalent or dominant taste of his period and culture. If so, does not this preclude the very possibility of a trans-cultural taste for which real universality and necessity might be claimed? Are we not, in short, driven back finally into the arms of the cultural relativists? And are we not thereby relieved of the necessity of asserting, in opposition to Kant, that beauty is real and objective in its own right?

It would be idle to deny the force of this relativistic argument which seems to be so powerfully supported by the notorious failure of the critics to agree, by the long historical record of violently fluctuating aesthetic taste (witness, for example, the high *and* low esteem in which Shakespeare has been held since his death), and by the profound differences in style and taste of different world cultures. Yet the relativist position, as it is usually stated, proves too much. If beauty is granted *no* objective reality, it is hard to see how any critic can claim, as critics invariably do claim, *any* degree of expertness in taste or critical insight, *even* within the limits of a more or less specifiable culture and historical period. We are also confronted by the fact that as our opportunities to enjoy and study works of art in other styles, periods, and cultures increase we can become more and more aware of the limitations of a narrow cultural or historical provincial-

ism and can seek in some measure to transcend such provincialism by developing a more catholic taste and by achieving a greater familiarity with, and understanding of, the art and the taste of periods and cultures other than our own. If we make this effort, we will discover not only that works of art in all styles range from the aesthetically inferior to the aesthetically superb but also, and significantly, that we can acquire a discriminating taste for good art *wherever* and *whenever* it appears. Finally, informed critics do agree as well as disagree, and their agreement is apt to be proportional to their ability to formulate and accept common standards of criticism and to their development and consistent use of a common language suited to the necessities of accurate communication of responsible critical opinion.

In short, those who believe in objective beauty and the possibility of real aesthetic insight and valid taste *do* have to resolve the admitted difficulties which all relativists are eager to urge. But the relativists, in turn, must explain such measure of agreement as does exist among sensitive and informed critics and, in addition, the very possibility of validating the claim which all connoisseurs and critics do make (explicitly or implicitly) and which the layman is almost universally willing to credit—namely, that good critics have *better* aesthetic taste than most laymen and that the cultivation of critical taste is not just a reconditioning process but a process of authentic education issuing in greater sensitivity and more enlightened critical appraisal.

These are a few of the considerations which I, at least, would offer in support of my criticism of Kant's denial of objective beauty. I therefore conclude, in a neo-Kantian vein, that beauty is a generically distinctive,

ineffable quality which manifests itself in varying degrees in nature and in art and which is, to aesthetic awareness, coercive, orderly, and public, and therefore objectively real. I would also contend that Beauty is, for aesthetic judgment, an empty but necessary point of reference by implicit appeal to which we judge all specific beauties, however "perfect," to fall short of absolute, final and all-inclusive Beauty, because they are all necessarily finite and, in the case of art, the creations of finite mortals. I would then insist, with Kant, that taste can be more or less discerning or valid, and therefore universal and necessary; and also, in opposition to Kant, that its proper object is beauty, or more accurately the sum of all finite instances of beauty. Finally, I would argue, in a neo-Kantian fashion, that responsible critics can and should test and verify their several judgments of taste by using with discrimination the three conjoint criteria of truth which Kant himself formulated in the first *Critique*: (a) the criterion of correspondence (fidelity to or conformity with primary aesthetic response duly sensitized and disciplined), (b) the criterion of coherence (the avoidance of contradiction between comparable judgments of taste and the promotion of mutual enlightenment of all one's judgments of taste taken in conjunction), and (c) the criterion of communicability (the refusal to regard either beauty or taste as merely private, and the determined effort to check one's own taste against the taste of all those for whose aesthetic judgment one has respect).

If this somewhat complex neo-Kantian extension of Kant's actual aesthetic is acceptable, Kant can fairly be said to have shown us how, in principle, to conceive of, and defend, the possibility of authentic aesthetic insight. Once again, no claim is here made for the possibility of

an infallible aesthetic or of indubitable aesthetic judgments. We are as fallible and finite here as we are in science and ethics. All that is claimed is the possibility, in principle and also in actuality, of varying degrees of aesthetic expertness in the detection and assessment of varying manifestations of authentic beauty.

We have already noted the inadequacy of Kant's account of art. His analysis of natural beauty, which he fails to relate to the "sublimity" of nature, is nearly as inadequate. It would take us too far afield to attempt here to indicate, even sketchily, the major problems which he leaves unidentified and unsolved in these areas. He makes no attempt to distinguish aesthetic quality, as such, from formal beauty, or non-expressive beauty from beauty that is, in its own distinctive way, expressive, or the expressiveness of well-designed technological artifacts from the expressiveness of works of art. Neither does he analyze the work of art into its basic ingredients or discuss the role in art of medium and subjectmatter, form and content, in their "organic" relation to each other. Nor, finally, does he seem to realize how complex is the task of responsible criticism, and how necessary is the judicious use, explicit or implicit, of several different though related criteria of appraisal. I have attempted to deal with these problems elsewhere.* Here I would merely like to propose a summary description of a work of art in order to raise once again, this time with specific reference, not to beauty in general, but to art in particular, the question with which we have been concerned throughout this chapter—the question of whether or not authentic aesthetic insight is plausible and, perchance, defensible.

* Cf. *The Arts and the Art of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 3d ed., 1947).

The description of art which I suggest is the following: A work of art is an artist's evaluative interpretation of his chosen subjectmatter. This interpretation reflects his unique perspective, historical period, and culture, but it may simultaneously be universal and abiding in human significance. This interpretation is expressed in and through the artist's unique formal organization of his chosen medium. If this description at all successfully epitomizes the essence of art, every work of art will have certain characteristics. (a) It will make use of one or more of the available media or languages of artistic creation and communication. (b) It will always, even in the non-representational arts of pure music, architecture, and non-objective painting and sculpture, deal with *some* subjectmatter—that is, with some aspect of human experience, or the objects of such experience, which the artist can interpret and evaluate. (c) It will acquire, from the artist's manipulation of his chosen medium, a unique organization, pattern, or form which is the locus of artistic beauty and the vehicle of artistic expressiveness. (d) Whatever is directly expressed in and through this artistic form will be the content or meaning of the work of art. (e) This content will be the artist's evaluative interpretation of his chosen subjectmatter. (f) This interpretation, finally, will be simultaneously ideosyncratic (expressing the artist's unique perspective and hierarchy of values), culturally conditioned (reflecting the artist's time and place in human history), and also, in direct proportion to the lasting significance of the work of art in question, universal in human meaning and import. So defined, art is man's most accurate and eloquent expression of the distinctive ethos of a culture and an epoch. It is, no less, the multiple record of man's most sensitive

and poignant interpretations and evaluations of human nature, of men in solitude and in social relation to one another, of nature and its significance for man, and of those cosmic mysteries which philosophy explores speculatively and which religion deals with in faith and reverent response. In short, the arts are, par excellence, man's most effective vehicles for the expression and communication of his most sensitive and profound insights into the significance, to man, of nature, man, and God in their complex relationships to one another.

If this is the nature of art, two questions, both variants of the basic question of this chapter, inevitably arise. First, can specific works of art be said to be more or less successful and significant consummations of the venture of artistic creativity; and, if so, can their success and significance, as works of art, be responsibly appraised? Second, is it also possible to assess the truth and the significance of the artist's alleged insights as these insights achieve expression in this or that specific work of art? Both of these questions raise once again the inclusive problem of aesthetic insight. Can a *critic* achieve, in principle, a valid insight into, and appraisal of, a work of art? And can an *artist*, in principle, have valid normative insights and communicate these insights to others in his art? Can either, or both, of these two types of insight be meaningful and verifiable?

It is certainly the implied, if not the explicit, claim of all art and literary critics that it is indeed their task to understand the works of art with which they concern themselves, to be sensitive to and to assess the aesthetic quality of specific artistic forms, and, finally, to apprehend and reconstruct, as far as possible, whatever the artist may in fact have expressed in and through his formal patterns.

This claim, which art-conscious laymen also make whenever they venture upon a response to art which is at all sensitive and responsible, rests on the basic presupposition that every work of art does have a complex and distinctive character of its own which is "objective" because it is coercive, orderly, and public in the manner of art. It also rests on the further presupposition that we who love and respect art, whether as critical experts or as serious amateurs, do have, in principle, the ability in varying degrees to apprehend *and* evaluate what the artist has actually offered us in his art. Since the entire artistic enterprise is so subtle and complex, the resultant work of art so unique, unpredictable, and illusive, and the critic's normal capacity for response to, and appraisal of, art so uneven and often so inadequate to the task, it is small wonder that critics as well as laymen often disagree very radically in their readings and their estimates of art. But I, for one, can see no possible justification for the sweeping scepticism which a completely subjectivistic account of art and literary criticism would entail. Here, as in the response of pure taste to pure beauty, the belief in the possibility of more or less valid, adequate, and judicious critical response to art is fully justified. A work of art, for all its uniqueness, *is* a proper object of critical insight and judgment, and such insight and judgment, never infallible but more or less reliable, *is* possible and, within limits, testable and verifiable.

Our apprehension and assessment of the truth and significance of the artist's expressed insights raise additional controversial problems. There are those who, while granting that an artist may succeed in expressing insights of profound truth and human import, believe that it is not the proper task of the critic, as such, to presume to sit

in judgment upon the truth or profundity of these insights. They would restrict the role of criticism to the assessment of aesthetic quality and of the artist's success in saying, through his art, what he has to say, whatever may be the value of his reports on life and reality. Others believe that the critic's task should be dictated by the total challenge of a work of art in its entirety. They therefore insist that, insofar as an artist tries to express in his art insights which he deems to be true and important, the critic should take this total effort into account and should, as his final task, try to assess the artist's success in this, as well as in other, respects.

We cannot here pause to debate the pros and cons of this continuing controversy. All that crucially concerns us is the basic presupposition of both parties, in opposition to that of all sceptical relativists, that the artist can, in principle, look at life in his own distinctively artistic way and achieve more or less valid insights into nature, man, and God which he can also, in principle, more or less accurately communicate to the artistically sensitive and trained observer. What is here assumed, in short, is not only that the *beauty* of art is objective but that the expressed *content* of a work of art can also be cognitively valid and important. This assumption, if correct, extends the concept of potentially valid aesthetic insight far beyond the realm of pure taste for pure beauty and justifies our regarding the work of art, including its expressed content, as meaningfully objective and as potentially the vehicle of authentic wisdom. The neo-Kantian aesthetic, here defended, would include and seek to justify all these affirmative conclusions.

What ontological status can we assign to beauty and to artistic quality if our defense of their objectivity is valid?

As Kant defines phenomena, beauty, taken to be objective, is certainly not merely phenomenal, though all its encounterable instances are necessarily phenomenal as are all specific instances of moral value. Beauty, like moral goodness, is a value, not a mere phenomenal fact, even though it manifests itself only in and through phenomenal actuality. Shall we therefore conclude that it is noumenal? We cannot do so according to Kant's own description of the noumenal world, which, as we have seen, is couched in exclusively moral terms. Indeed, Kant's denial that beauty is objective would seem to force him to conclude that beauty's only status is psychological and therefore purely phenomenal. Yet, inconsistently but fortunately, Kant does repeatedly refer, in the *Critique of Judgment*, to a trans-phenomenal realm which he entitles the "supersensible substrate" and which he seems to regard as the trans-phenomenal source of natural beauty and of the natural purposiveness which he carefully studies in the second part of this *Critique*. He never makes clear, however, the precise relation of the noumenal realm of moral value and this supersensible substrate.

As we have said, the generic concept of value was not available to Kant in the eighteenth century. Had it been in philosophic vogue at his time, he might quite well have taken the step which the neo-Kantian revision of Kant here defended would recommend—namely, the redefinition of the realm of noumena as the realm of values, *both* moral and aesthetic. So conceived, beauty, like moral virtue would be both a value and noumenal—or, more precisely, it would be noumenal by virtue of being an objective value. This conclusion, though not explicitly Kantian, is certainly consistent with the major trend of Kant's own philosophical thinking.

Kant never asked himself at the end of the third *Critique*, as he did at the end of the first *Critique*, the crucial question of speculative reason: Is that all? He seems to have felt that he had at last completed his gigantic task; he certainly wrote no fourth *Critique*. But he did, within a brief period, undertake what he might well have made the distinctive venture of a fourth *Critique*. He worked out his own analysis of religion and his own critique of the Christian faith, as he conceived of it, in a volume entitled *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. He thus at least opened the door to an analysis of still another generic type of experience and its basic presuppositions, namely, man's religious experience. How successful was he in this final major venture?

5 *Religious Insight and Divine Revelation*

Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* is typically eighteenth century in literary style and tone but curiously modern in its basic epistemological focus. It records the prolonged effort of a great humanist to do full justice to religion in general, and to Christianity in particular, without affront to his own moral and intellectual integrity. It clearly reflects eighteenth century European culture in its pronounced individualism and rationalism and in its deep-dyed suspicion of history; in many ways it is typical of the Continental and British deism of the period. But Kant was a man of far greater stature, morally

and spiritually, than most of his deistic contemporaries and predecessors—Voltaire and Reimarus, Herbert of Cherbury, Tindal and Locke. He was therefore able to explore man's spiritual motivations and aspirations with a profundity which they could not rival. As a result, his *Religion* is one of the great ethical documents of Western culture. In it some of the deepest insights and convictions of Western humanism are expounded with unparalleled clarity and passion. Modern humanists whose "religion" is focused upon human dignity and value, freedom and responsibility, will find in it an eloquent expression of their humanistic faith.

Kant does his best to come to grips, sympathetically and honestly, with the distinctive doctrines of historical Christianity. He discusses at length the problems of ultimate good and evil, sin and salvation, reason and revelation, and the kingdom of God. He explores the nature and validity of "ecclesiastical faith" and explains why he judges this faith to be inferior to what he entitles "pure religious faith" and why the coming of the kingdom of God, as he conceives of it, must await the "exclusive sovereignty" of a "religion within the limits of reason alone." His critique of Christianity and his defense of his humanistic faith prophetically anticipate the approach, and many of the conclusions, of such modern humanists as John Dewey, Erich Fromm, Ralph Flewelling, Edgar Brightman, and Lewis Mumford. Like them, Kant exhibits great respect for what he conceives to be the lofty ethical idealism of Christianity; his concern, like theirs, is to recapture its idealism in all its purity. He is therefore determined to chip away what he, and they, regard as the unnecessary and obfuscating shell of ecclesiastical rite and theological dogma in

order to save and revitalize its moral kernel of abiding value.

Kant's *Religion* thus notably enriches his earlier moral theory. I know of no secular study of man as a moral agent which surpasses it in moral fervor and in realistic diagnosis of the human heart. But, from the religious and Christian perspective, its notable humanistic strength is offset by its almost complete failure to comprehend man's distinctively religious quest.

Try as he may, Kant is unable to see the characteristic phenomena of religion in general, or of Christianity in particular, save through the eyes of an utterly convinced humanist. His basic orientation is incorrigibly anthropocentric rather than theocentric. His basic presupposition is man's ultimate autonomy and self-sufficiency. His highest loyalty is to man's moral reason, not to the God of an enlightened religious faith. He is eloquent, in the *Religion*, in his description of the age-old conflict between what he calls the "Good" and the "Evil" Principles for sovereignty over man; but he is quite convinced that it is man himself, and he alone, who can and must decide the final result of this conflict. He acknowledges the great historical value of the church, but he has no doubt that the "moral principle of religion" must and can ultimately displace the "pseudo-service of God"—the "clericalism" and "religious illusion" of "statutory" religion. He rejects as spurious and superstitious the distinctively Christian doctrines of sin and salvation, forgiveness and redemption. He reduces sin to moral evil, and salvation to man's moral regeneration on his own initiative; he completely repudiates Divine forgiveness and Divine redemption. Prayer, for him, is not only futile but positively immoral, because it is, he

believes, man's attempt to escape his own moral responsibility and to substitute petition to God for resolute moral endeavor. He denies the very possibility of religious "communion" with God and believes that we can best honor God not by worshiping Him, in public or in private, but by making ourselves virtuous in accordance with the dictates of moral reason. He reinterprets the Christian doctrine of the Kingdom of God in strictly humanistic terms as the "gradual establishment on earth of the sovereignty of the Good Principle" which can and should rule the human heart through man's obedience to the Moral Law. He reveres the historical Jesus as a man of exemplary virtue, but he wholly rejects the Christian doctrine of the eternal Christ, the Logos made flesh. He does "postulate" the existence of God, but this God is for him in no sense the "living God" of the Hebraic-Christian tradition "in whom we live and move and have our being."

It is true that Kant was always haunted by a sense of cosmic mystery. "The starry heavens in their incalculable immensity, the inescapable finitude of all human cognition, the paradox of artistic genius, the sublimity of the moral law, the baffling complexity of life and human consciousness—all this awakens in Kant a spirit of reverence." * One of his close friends testified that, throughout his maturity, Kant was "convinced in his heart that the world is in the hands of a wise Providence" and that "in the true sense of the word he was a worshiper of God." †

* Cf. p. lxxvii of Introduction to Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, tr. with an Introduction and Notes by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (Open Court Publishing Company, 1934).

† *Immanuel Kant—Die Biographien von L. E. Borowski, R. B. Jackmann und A. Ch. Wasianski* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1912), pp. 169, 172.

This testimony is impressive, but it must be taken in the context of Kant's actual life and writings. Actually, his sense of reverence, however sincere, was not a reverence for God but rather for "the starry heavens above and the Moral Law within." It was a reverence for the mysteries of nature and the mysterious depths of the human heart. Kant was incapable of genuine religious awe for the "Holy" in its distinctively religious sense. He failed, to the end, to understand man's generic religious experience, even at its enlightened best. He could therefore not achieve in this area what he had achieved, with such signal success, in his analysis of man's sensory experience and his moral experience, and, with such impressive though limited insight, in his analysis of man's aesthetic experience.

Were we primarily concerned with Kant's own thought, we should of course be obliged to scrutinize his argument in the *Religion* more fully. Our present purpose is rather to derive from Kant whatever help we can in our current inquiry as to whether man's age-old claims to authentic insight—scientific and moral, aesthetic and religious—can be validated. We have found Kant's basic approach in the first *Critique* to be very helpful not only in science but also in the areas of morals and aesthetic endeavor. Kant himself, for the reasons already indicated, failed to apply this method in the field of religion. He failed to take man's generic religious experience "seriously," that is, to regard it as a possible source of reliable clues to the reality and the nature of the God of religious worship. Let us, then, try to sketch, in basic outline, a neo-Kantian analysis of religion analogous to Kant's own analysis of man's other generic types of experience.

Starting, as Kant might himself have done, with the total Gestalt (man as religious believer—religious experience as

a cognitive process—God as the object of this experience), let us attempt, first of all, to discover the distinguishing characteristics of man's religious experience. Can we, in justice to the incredible variety of man's so-called "religious" experiences, distill from them their significant essence? What is the irreducible and universal component in man's religious quest?

Religion can be defined, most inclusively, as "ultimate loyalty"—as that loyalty to which final priority is assigned in the inevitable conflict of loyalties. It is clear that man can be ultimately loyal to anything—to sex, or sport, or success, or self-development, to science, or art, or peace, or human welfare, or God. These ultimate loyalties, moreover, can be either largely individual or predominantly social and corporate. I can live my life in final loyalty to my own highest objective, or I can join with others in a common loyalty to business enterprise or cultural advance, to human welfare, or to a transcendent Deity. Nazism under Hitler was a full-blown "religion" in this inclusive sense, with its own symbols and rites, its own messiah and apostles, its own scapegoat and doctrine of salvation. This all-embracing definition of religious dedication has its merits, but it fails to focus upon what even William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* regards as crucial to religion as such. How, then, can we redefine the religious experience to sharpen our focus upon this distinctive factor?

We can do so by limiting it, with Rudolf Otto,* to those experiences which, in some way, express man's "awe" for the "holy." The use of these two explicitly religious terms in this definition of the religious experience involves us

* Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, tr. by John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, rev. ed., 1925).

in a kind of tautology, but in a manner both legitimate and fruitful.

It is legitimate because it is our working premise that we are here, once again, dealing with a unique and irreducible type of human experience which is therefore, of necessity, describable only in terms of itself and not, with any adequacy, in terms of any analogous experience. We are assuming, in short, that the distinctive core or essence of the religious experience is ineffable. The ineffable can be "known" only by experience at firsthand and can be described only by reference to this first-hand experience; its distinctive quality cannot, in principle, be communicated or made intelligible to anyone who has never had such an experience in any form. All valid accounts of the inner essence of the religious experience *must*, therefore, be at least partly tautological.

The terms "awe" and "holiness" do, nevertheless, enrich our understanding of the religious experience by at least specifying its most distinctive accompanying attitude as "awe" and by relating this "awe" to its appropriate referent, "holiness." What do the terms "awe" and "holiness" here signify? To answer this question we must turn to the religions of mankind and, in particular, take account of the evolution of religion from its most primitive beginnings to its most developed or "higher" stages.

"Awe," in a primitive culture, is perhaps best described as an elemental shudder expressive of a deep unarticulated fear of the unknown; the "holy" is probably, at this stage, merely the eerie, weird, strange, or uncanny. Primitive man's ignorance of natural law is so great and his helplessness in the face of natural dangers is so pronounced that nameless fear must have been his constant companion—in the dark woods, on a solitary eminence, in the pres-

ence of fire and flood, storm and drought, disease and sudden tragedy. It is this inescapable danger and dread that impel him, as we know from anthropological report, to conceive of mana, a mysterious power pervading nature and liable to injure him in countless ways, to enunciate taboos or prohibitions designed to protect him from ever-threatening mana, to develop an elaborate mythology to explain natural phenomena in terms of spirits which animate nature and make things happen as they do, and, finally, to devise magical symbols and rites with which to protect himself against these spirits, or perhaps to persuade them, by gifts and sacrifices, to promote his welfare and that of his tribe.

We can trace the gradual and uneven evolution of man's religious beliefs, attitudes, and customs from this primitive animism to an early polytheism in which a multitude of local spirits are slowly replaced by a pantheon of gods, male and female, each more powerful than the earlier spirits but all with limited prerogatives and all, like men, possessed of finite virtues and vices. Religion then develops through a higher polytheism in which one of these gods achieves ascendancy over all his rivals and, now endowed with justice and righteousness, is worshiped as the vengeful but protective deity of the tribe. We finally reach religion in its last stages of development in the several so-called "higher" religions of mankind.*

As we retrace this tortuous evolution of man's religious quest we discover that his concept of God and his various responses to God develop hand in hand. As the Divine transforms itself in man's thinking from spirit to god, and

* Religious evolution has not always followed this tidy sequence. Contemporary anthropology and the history of religions indicate many important variants from this order of evolutionary stages.

from a finite god who is unpredictable and "all too human" into the God of all mankind who is infinite in knowledge and power and who is the quintessence of justice, righteousness, and love, man's response to Him changes correspondingly from blind fear to a more enlightened respect, and finally into an enlightened awe and reverence for a God who requires of man, not servility, but inner righteousness and responsive love.

This second definition of religion as man's "awe-ful" response to the "holy" has the great advantage of being applicable to all these types and stages of religious experience; but it invites a fallacious reduction of religion to its lowest common denominator. We must be careful to avoid the genetic fallacy of identifying the essence of any evolving process with its primitive beginnings and of assessing its validity and value in terms of its crude and superstitious origins. Man's primitive myths and rites were the first beginnings not only of religion as we know it today but also of modern science and philosophy. It would be as unfair to identify all religion with primitive superstition and magic as it would be to assess the truth and the value of modern science and modern philosophy in terms of man's earliest speculations about nature and the cosmos. Our chief present concern is the validity and the value of religion at its enlightened best. We should therefore not merely identify awe and holiness as the pervasive characteristics of all religious experience, however primitive or developed; we should focus our attention primarily on man's highest apprehensions of holiness and his most disciplined and purified feelings of awe and reverence.

Here, however, we encounter another characteristic of religion which seems sharply to differentiate it, even in its most advanced stages, from evolving modern science.

Scientists have learned how to progress, arm in arm, on a united front. They have developed a method of inquiry which has become international and trans-cultural. They have invented a universal language which all scientists accept and with which they can accurately communicate with one another. They have established common criteria by reference to which they can check each other's observations and test new hypotheses and theories. Theirs is an achievement in world-wide mutual understanding and co-operation which is unparalleled in the long complex history of the human race.

The history of man's religions is notably different. It does indeed record the tendency of every evolving religion to become more and more universal in scope and claim. Local spirits do give way to gods who are endowed with greater powers; and these, in turn, are finally supplanted by a God who, it is claimed, is the one and only God of all creation and of all mankind. But religion is still, even its most developed forms, culturally oriented. To study it at its enlightened best we must turn to Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity—to the "world religions" which, however much they may have in common, are nevertheless rivals that compete with one another for man's allegiance, each tending to claim, more or less dogmatically and evangelically, that *it* is the one true religion and that *its* God is the one and only God of the universe. This claim is intensified in the three great religions which have originated historically in the Near East, for each of these attaches special importance to what it regards as its special revelation to its own "chosen people" within the context of its own distinctive religious tradition. When, therefore, we refer to *the* "highest" conception of holiness and awe, we must have in mind what

all these advanced religions have in common, or, alternatively, we must be pointing to the loftiest conception of God and the most purified sense of awe which any "man of faith" can achieve within his particular religious tradition and accept as valid.

This multiplicity of the "higher" religions does not compel us, however, to conclude that all religious faith is therefore invalid or, indeed, that mankind's approaches to God must forever remain as multiple and diverse as they are today. The chief single obstacle to greater mutual understanding in religion and to a more cooperative human search for God is ecclesiastical idolatry and theological dogmatism. Every type of organized religion today, in minor sects as well as in more inclusive religious bodies, tends to absolutize *its* theological conception of God, *its* special rites and ceremonies, *its* emergent moral and social precepts. This universal tendency is highly paradoxical because each of the "higher" religions emphasizes the infinite, mysterious, and incomprehensible depths of the Divine Being and, no less, man's inescapable finitude and sinfulness. These two convictions should, in conjunction, foster a greater humility and tolerance in the area of religious belief and practice than in any other area of human endeavor. Yet nearly all of the leading spokesmen of every major religion insist not only on the truth of their special revelation but also on the exclusiveness of this truth and the adequacy of their apprehension of it.

This suggests the possibility of a third definition of religion which would have the merits of transcending, at least in principle, all such religious parochialism and of pointing a hopeful prophetic finger toward a possible future evolution of man's religious quest. I refer to Paul Tillich's definition of religion as "man's ultimate concern for the

Ultimate.” * This definition stresses two facts: first, that the religion that is vital to each of us does indeed reflect our highest loyalty or ultimate concern, however limited our vision; but, second, that this ultimate concern possesses religious *validity* only in proportion as it is our sincere quest after, and response to, the Ultimate itself—that is, whatever in Reality is *in fact* worthy of our highest allegiance. We would all agree that man’s scientific quest is authentic, however incorrect or inadequate his successive conclusions, if, and only if, it expresses a resolute effort to probe nature itself and to discover its real structure, whatever that structure may prove to be. Similarly, man’s search for God and response to Him is authentic if, and only if, it is ultimately directed to what Tillich calls “the God behind all gods”—that Ultimate Holiness and Power which Hindus, Moslems, Jews, and Christians apprehend and worship in their more or less similar yet importantly diverse ways.

If man’s reverent response to the Holy is conceived of in these ultimate terms, all men of religious faith, of whatever historic faith, are fully justified in being loyal to their own religious tradition, but they are also obligated to respect other religious traditions for whatever sincerity and truth they may in fact possess. The dual presupposition of religion, so conceived, is: (a) that God Himself may well have revealed Himself in different ways at different times to different peoples, that each religious tradition may well be entrusted with precious and irreplaceable religious insights, and that these insights should therefore be cherished and not discarded or forgotten; but (b) that all religions

* Cf. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, tr. with concluding essay by James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), and other books by Tillich.

are also human enterprises, the fallible and finite responses of sinful men to the Divine initiative, and that all theological accounts of God are therefore, of necessity, imperfect and not final or absolute. This interpretation of religion involves no blasphemous relativizing of whatever God *Himself* may have done to reveal *Himself* to men in history. His Self-Revelations are as absolute as He alone can make them. What is here condemned as truly blasphemous is man's pernicious tendency to absolutize his own finitudes and to play god by claiming for his own best insights an infallibility or omniscience which God alone can rightfully claim.

This must suffice to indicate how, in principle, an analysis of man's religious experience might be undertaken and how, in general, some of the grave emergent difficulties might be resolved. We cannot, of course, here attempt even to outline a theology that does justice to man's deepest insights, religious and secular, non-Christian and Christian, into the Ultimate Mystery that encompasses us as finite mortals. Our present task is far more modest but nevertheless important. It is to determine whether Kant's basic method of inquiry is or is not applicable and useful in this area of religious faith.

We have tried to indicate the possibility of identifying what can fairly be entitled man's generic religious experience and of describing, or at least pointing to, the basic characteristics of this experience. Man's sense of "awe," analogous to his sense of duty and his aesthetic sense, is certainly one of these characteristics; others could easily be found and systematically explored. It is also evident, I believe, that man's religious experience is not, as such, self-explanatory or self-contained. It is always someone's experience of something; it is a relational process with a

subjective and an objective pole. It presupposes a religious agent as its subject and Divinity as its object. Kant's Gestalt (knower—knowing—the knowable), duly translated into religious terms, is as applicable here as Kant found it to be in the first and second *Critiques*.

We have also noted the parallel evolution, in human history, of man's sense of awe and his understanding of the holy. As his apprehension of God evolved, so did his sense of reverence and his pattern of appropriate religious behavior. His conception of himself, *vis à vis* the Deity, has evolved correspondingly. As he gradually came to conceive of God as creator he became increasingly aware of his own creatureliness. As he ascribed infinity to God he became overwhelmed by a sense of his own finitude. It was God's perfect righteousness that brought home to him his own sinfulness. It was his growing conviction that the God he encountered and worshiped was a God of redemptive and sacrificial love that persuaded him of his own need for forgiveness and redemption, and tended to elicit his responsive repentance, gratitude, obedience, and love. In short, the history of religion, seen in large outline and in long perspective, is a history of the evolution of the total religious configuration or Gestalt—a concomitant evolution of man as seeker and worshiper, of belief and worship, and of man's ever changing theological apprehension of God as the "object" of his quest and his encounter.

How real is this object of man's religious experience? If we make use, once again, of Kant's three hallmarks of reality, now in the context of religious faith, we find that the God of religious encounter and faith is alleged by the believer to possess all three. However differently God is conceived of in the theologies of the higher religions,* the

* Confucionism should probably be excepted.

well-nigh unanimous report of men and women of vital and authentic faith is that God is coercively encountered with a character of His own. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition He presents Himself to Moses in the Burning Bush and on Mount Sinai, to the major and minor prophets of Israel, to Paul on the road to Damascus, and to all the saints and mystics, not as a mere human ideal, or even as a static Platonic Idea or Form, but as a dynamic Being with a nature of His own which men of faith must accept, however much they may fear His righteous wrath or rejoice in His redemptive love. This encountered God, moreover, is never judged to be the private God of the ideosyncratic worshiper, even though He speaks to man's innermost being in privacy and solitude. If he is authentically *my* God, He is, by the same token, *our* God. He is the "public" God of all men and all creation, available to all and the ultimate Source of all reality. Finally, the more developed our theology, the firmer is the conviction that God is "orderly"; He is constant and unchanging, faithful to His promises and unwaveringly just and merciful. The more enlightened our religious faith, in turn, the more determined is the effort of most theologians * to make our belief in God and His relation to man and the universe logically consistent and coherent. *Reflective* faith *must* assume the inner consistency of all truth, and therefore the ultimate coherence of all valid religious insights.

We can push our neo-Kantian analysis a step further. Kant's threefold criterion of truth is as applicable to our alleged religious insights as it is to our scientific, moral, and aesthetic insights. As theologians grapple with the problem of man's knowledge of God they invoke the

* Including most contemporary neo-orthodox theologians, at least *within* their own theological framework.

criterion of correspondence. They seek to do full justice to what they consider to be man's most reliable and revealing primary religious experiences. It is only as a religious faith, once vital, begins to lose its vitality that theology neglects its empirical anchorage and lapses into rootless speculation. Similarly, as religion grows in enlightenment, the criterion of coherence is resorted to. Conceptual clarity of doctrine and avoidance of contradiction between accepted religious and secular beliefs are increasingly sought for. Finally, every religious faith, in direct proportion to the universality which it ascribes to Deity, appeals to the criterion of communicability; it seeks to make available to "all who have ears to hear" what it judges to be a universally valid redemptive truth. Religions do, indeed, differ in missionary zeal and also in the spirit and manner in which they seek to propagate their faith; but I know of no developed religion which will not welcome sincere converts, and which despairs of communicating its central belief to penitent unbelievers.

In making these large generalizations I have been obliged to ignore important differences between the great rival world religions. I may also have seemed to imply that man's most enlightened approach to God is an eclectic compromise which avoids wholehearted religious commitment to a coherent set of beliefs within the framework of one of the great historic religions. This conclusion, to which some people today subscribe, is not logically entailed by the foregoing analysis. It also runs directly counter to the historical record of man's slowly evolving religious enlightenment.

However solitary and intimate the relation of the individual worshiper to God may be, man's search for God has always been corporate and communal as well as individual.

It is only within a religious tradition that steady progress has ever been made in the deepening and clarifying of man's private "I-Thou" encounter with Deity. The great saints, prophets, and mystics of history have never been complete mavericks or strays. However much they may have eventually sought solitude, and however individualized their emergent faith, they have invariably been the products of some great religious tradition by which they have been taught and disciplined and with which most of them have remained affiliated for life. The attempt to escape religious provincialism by refusing to identify oneself with any religious community is doomed to failure. Parochialism cannot be avoided by mere non-conformity. Only *within* a rich tradition can it, by imagination and humility, be transcended. Is it not significant that those in any historic faith who are regarded as saints, nearest to God, tend to be more akin in tolerance, humility, and charity to the saints of other faiths than they are to their more ecclesiastically minded fellow believers or to the members at large of their own religious community? Intolerance and bigotry, in religion as in secular life, are symptoms of religious uncertainty, not of assurance and inner peace. They bespeak weakness, not spiritual strength. Those who have traveled farthest along any of the great "Ways" to God are closer to one another spiritually than are their religiously less advanced followers. In this sense all the higher religions, at their developed best, may be said to be self-corrective and self-transcendent. Their own deepest insights constitute a prophetic critique of their own traditional parochialism and intolerance.

It might also be supposed that this account of religion implies a kind of religious egalitarianism which declares that all of man's religious ventures are of equal validity

and promise. Actually, such a conclusion makes no sense, either logically or historically. Conflicting religious beliefs cannot all be true, though they may all be false. But there is no reason to believe that some religious beliefs, like some secular beliefs, may not be truer than their rival alternatives. Given human finitude and the mysterious depths of the Deity, it is surely most reasonable to assume that no human apprehension of God is at all adequate to His nature. But unless we embrace from the outset a radical religious scepticism, it is surely equally reasonable to assume that some of man's religious ventures are in fact more successful than others in achieving religious insight and in promoting authentic religious communion.

If, then, it be asked: Which Way is the truest and best Way to God? our answer must be threefold. First, the road we choose in faith (if we have any choice—and all men have *some* freedom of religious choice, however limited the actually available religious or unreligious alternatives may be) is the road which we, rightly or wrongly, do in fact judge to be the best and which, at our own mortal risk, we decide to travel. But, second, very much depends upon the spirit in which we press onward on the road we have chosen. Humility and dedication may well yield deeper insights along a more indirect Way than can self-righteous dogmatism along a more direct and valid approach to God. Third, *a priori* certainty is no more possible in man's religious quest than in his secular ventures. Here, as elsewhere, life itself—that is, Reality itself, or God Himself—judges us, rewarding our successes with spiritual health and peace and punishing our failures with frustration and misery.

To say that life itself assesses our religious as well as our secular undertakings is to resort to a pragmatic test of

truth. This is, I believe, both legitimate and hazardous. It is legitimate and, indeed, necessary unless we choose to abandon ourselves to an utterly blind faith, or unless we accept, at our own risk and without question, some absolute religious authority, because the *only empirical* way we have, while we are still alive, of testing the validity of *any* belief, secular or religious, is to scrutinize and assess the apparent results of that belief in our own life and in the lives of other human beings. A belief in God, judged to be righteous and merciful, which produced in the sincere believer nothing but unrighteousness and cruelty would surely be suspect. So would a faith in a God of redemptive love which made us less able and eager to love the Lord our God and our neighbor as ourself. So would a faith in God as man's ultimate Source of the "peace that passeth all understanding" that resulted, empirically, in growing frustration and misery and in no moments of ecstatic joy and beatitude. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The Bible is eloquent in its descriptions of the fruits of a vital faith in a Living God and in its insistence upon the revealing significance of these "works" and "rewards" of faith.

But we must be on our guard against a misapplication of this pragmatic criterion in too narrow or too exclusive a reliance upon religious feelings, whether these feelings are satisfying or disquieting. The mystics are unanimous in confessing that the Way to God is bound to plunge the sincere searcher into the "dark night of the soul"—not only once but often in his spiritual pilgrimage. The prophets warn us repeatedly against the spurious satisfactions of self-righteousness. Our sense of being in communion with God and of doing His will may well be illusory; our sense of being utterly lost and abandoned may be spiritually

beneficial. Finally, the wisest theologians are surely right in their insistence on the crucial importance of what God Himself is and does, on what He has revealed Himself to be as redemptive righteous love, and on the inevitable inadequacy of *all* our finite responses, intellectual, emotional, and volitional, to His Self-revelation and His Divine initiative. It is therefore to God and His mighty works, rather than to our own all-too-human individual and corporate responses to these works, that we must turn for the criterion by reference to which alone we can hope to assess our own pragmatic criterion of religious insight. There is truth in the pragmatic thesis that that is true which "works," or, as William James puts it, "pays dividends." But how, save by an ultimate appeal to revelation, "natural" or "special," can we know what *really* "works," what "dividends" are authentic spiritual dividends?

If this is the case, how shall we conceive of revelation? Man seems to be confronted by three types or areas of reality—by the spatio-temporal "world" of nature, by his fellow men as morally responsible human beings, and by those mysterious depths which philosophy speculatively explores and which the man of religious faith encounters as holy and Divine. Each of these three aspects of Reality makes itself known to us in its own distinctive way. Nature "manifests" itself to us, partly by intruding upon us in coercive sense perception, partly by slowly yielding up its inner secrets in response to the initiative and ingenuity of the experimental scientist. We learn to know our fellow men and the regularities of human nature and behavior, partly through observation and reflection, but also, crucially, because men "express" themselves to us in symbol and art. Our understanding of other human beings would

indeed be superficial and impoverished if they, on *their* initiative, did not make known to us in countless ways their innermost hopes and fears, their beliefs and doubts, their values and disvalues. The term "revelation" can most appropriately be used to signify what God has in fact done to reveal Himself to man. Insofar as His Self-revelation is universal, in nature and the human heart, and therefore equally available to all men at all times and in all human cultures, we can properly entitle it "natural" revelation. When, in contrast, God has also revealed Himself to men in special ways and in specific cultures, this type of revelation can fairly be entitled "special." Anyone who faithfully participates in one of the great religious traditions will, of course, attach unique importance to the revelation of his own tradition. He will also be powerfully impelled to make exclusive claims for this revelation as the one and only reliable indication of *the* Way to God. But would it not be far more consonant with religious humility and also with the nature of God, as "high" religion usually conceives of Him, to believe that God has indeed "spoken" to man and that man encounters Him in diverse ways—in "natural" revelation, in the "special" revelation of the believers' own religious tradition, and also, though perhaps far less decisively, in the "special" revelations of other great traditions?

This brings us, in conclusion, to the concept of "faith" which is so very crucial in all religious experience and reflection. What is faith, and how shall we assess its value in general and its validity in specific instances? This question can best be answered with the help of four basic distinctions.

The first is the distinction between "initial" and "resultant" faith. No human enterprise, including man's

religious quest, can be understood without first-hand participation or involvement, and such involvement requires, at the outset, an act of "initial" faith. Only by entering into it, at least with lively, imaginative sympathy, can we discover the nature of the venture in question, whether it be scientific or artistic, economic or political, philosophic or religious, and hope to understand the results of such a venture. We can enter into it as an "agent" and see it "from the inside" only on the basis of a faith that the venture may in fact be valid and promising. This faith involves our initial acceptance, however blind at the outset, of the basic presuppositions of the venture—in the religious quest, of the reality of Divinity and of God's accessibility to man. Those who are unable or unwilling to risk this initial act of faith are automatically doomed to complete ignorance as to what such a venture might in fact make available to them in emergent experience and insight.

Initial faith must, by its very nature, be largely blind and credulous. It is only as we take an active part in the venture in question that we gradually learn, with growing comprehension, what others have already learned along this road, that we begin to have relevant and revealing experiences of our own, and that our emergent faith becomes progressively more and more informed, enlightened, and confirmed. The more steadfastly we press on, the greater and the more justified is our assurance not only that we are on the right track, facing in the right direction and proceeding in a proper manner, but also that our successive insights are in fact becoming clearer, more profound, and therefore more and more true or valid. No isolated experience or conclusion can validate itself in any secular or religious pursuit. We move from blind credulity to ever more assured *and* reflective faith as we learn from others,

multiply our own experiences, and test our evolving interpretations against the funded wisdom of our own and other traditions.

This was St. Paul's experience. His vision on the road to Damascus was vivid and compelling enough to force him to continue his journey in a radically new spirit. He presently established contact with the Christian community, not in a spirit of hostility, but in the spirit of a penitent and humble convert. But it took years of living the Christian life with all its trials, dangers, deep satisfactions, and deepening insights to develop in him that ringing "resultant" faith which he expresses so often with such moving eloquence. The more reflective and informed our faith becomes, the more mature it is, the more reliable and valid, and therefore the greater its *enlightened* assurance or certitude.

It is also helpful to distinguish between "primary" and "secondary" faith. The former is based upon first-hand experiences and reflection, the latter on the report or authority of others. So defined, all initial faith is, in itself, secondary; at the outset, if we start from scratch, we embark on a new venture merely because others seem to have found profit in this venture. We believe in *it*, blindly and hesitatingly, because we believe in its *proponents*, that is, because we possess some measure of primary faith in their integrity and competence. It is only as we make progress on our own, with the help of the tradition, secular or religious, with which we have experimentally identified ourselves, that our initial secondary faith gradually transforms itself into a more and more enlightened and confirmed primary faith. We may, in fact, never transcend secondary faith in some areas. Do not Christians, for example, believe in immortality chiefly, if not wholly, be-

cause they have faith in the profound spiritual wisdom of Jesus as the Christ whose more primary faith in immortality seems so indubitable?

The third distinction has already been discussed. It is the distinction between a relatively blind and unenlightened faith and a faith that can become indefinitely more and more factually oriented and reflectively clarified and tested. We must indeed honor the sincere faith, however credulous, of those who are incapable of greater critical insight. We can do so, however, without minimizing the incalculable value of traditional wisdom, enriching personal experience, and theoretical clarification. What the "high" religions stress above all is the vitality of a sincere and wholehearted faith; but such religions merit the designation "high" because they also value the refinements, both "empirical" and "rational," of the insights of the mature believer.

Finally, it is important, though not easy, to distinguish "faith in" from "faith that." The former primarily reflects relevant direct encounter; the latter, man's interpretation of such encounter. We have "faith in," or believe *in*, natural objects because we continually encounter them; we believe *in* people as persons on the basis of our first-hand human relations with them; the man of faith believes *in* God on the strength of his confrontations with Him. As we explore the "objects" of such "faith in" we become more and more confident that they do, in fact, possess the various characteristics which we progressively attribute to them in explicit or implicit propositional affirmation. We learn *that* nature possesses such and such regularities, *that* man in general and this or that person in particular possess various attributes, and *that* the God *in* whom we believe has a more or less specifiable character of His own. Both

"faith in" and "faith that," so defined, are superior in assurance and illumination to "faith about," if the latter be conceived of as "secondary" faith. Man's acceptance of God which is merely, or primarily, an acceptance of what men say about God, is, religiously, of least import, though it may well be the necessary first step to a more vital and mature faith. "Faith in" God, in turn, is not only a necessary foundation for man's religious explorations of God's nature; it always transcends "faith that" in significance. However successful our exploration of God may be, our resultant knowledge of God, the emergent faith *that* God has such and such specifiable attributes, can, in principle, never equal in scope or depth man's deepest abiding faith *in* the God whom he encounters and worships.

The same is true of our several creedal approaches to man and nature. Our faith in both is least meaningful and assured when it is a mere "faith about." It becomes progressively informed as we more and more clearly identify various natural and human phenomena and formulate their respective regularities. What we live by and most vitally cherish, however, is our ever deepening faith *in* nature and its objects and events, *in* mankind and the individual persons with whom we are in most intimate and vital relation.

These four distinctions, duly combined, justify the conclusion that religious faith at its mature best is an "enlightened," "primary," "resultant" faith which differs crucially from a mere faith *about* God, which reflects a growing realization of *what* God is, but which, above all, is a living faith *in* God Himself. "Faith in" can, indeed, never be wholly divorced from "faith that," for such a faith would, by definition, be faith in the utterly unknown and unknowable, and would therefore be psychologically

impossible, logically meaningless, and religiously incomprehensible. "Faith that" outruns "faith in" whenever man's approach to God is more intellectual than existential. This tends to be the strength and the weakness of philosophers in their speculations about God. Authentic religion, like authentic morality and an authentic natural piety, must always give absolute priority to "faith in" as the beginning and the end of wisdom.

In the light of this analysis it is clear that faith is, in its generic essence, an assurance based always on partial evidence and incomplete understanding. A being who could know nothing would be incapable of faith, and faith in the completely unknowable is quite impossible. By the same token, an omniscient Being would be incapable of faith and would of course, not need to resort to faith. Only man, Pascal's "thinking reed," can have faith, because he can know something but never everything. Life itself, meanwhile, forces us continually to act, with or without conscious decision, and every human action, once performed, is unalterable. We would prefer to act only with certain knowledge; we sometimes act in blind ignorance. But when we reflect before we act and then act reflectively, we can do so only in faith. This is equally true in every area of human decision and activity. The widespread myth that science, for example, relies wholly on reason and makes no use of faith, whereas religion depends wholly and exclusively on faith, is utterly unfounded and untrue. We *must* live by faith, in marriage and business, in art and science, as well as in religion; and if we would live well, we must have a faith that will really sustain us and enable us to meet, with fortitude and joy, whatever life may have in store for us. Our vital option, therefore, is never faith or absence of faith, but the *kind* of faith, secular or re-

ligious, primary or secondary, credulous or enlightened, that we make our own. That some kinds of faith, in every walk of life, are vastly superior to others, should by now be abundantly clear.

All faith is partly a gift, partly an achievement. No one can take a deep breath and, by a sheer act of will, believe in something whose reality is, to him, *wholly* dubious or unknowable. All we can do is to put ourselves "in the way of" faith—that is, to expose ourselves to whatever influences may in fact generate a faith in us, and, in the process, to develop in ourselves whatever latent capacities we may in fact have for this or that type of faith. Then, if and when faith blossoms and, perchance, ripens, we will ourselves be impelled to acknowledge, in all honesty, that our faith is indeed a "gift" not wholly of our own making. The greater our emergent faith, the greater is our impulsive gratitude for it likely to be. This is the universal testimony of all great lovers and statesmen, artists, and men of God.

In the area of religious faith it is very important to do full justice both to the Divine Initiative and to man's response to this initiative. Pascal put it well when he said that God had three options. He could have hidden Himself from man so completely that no one could ever find Him. This would have been cruel. He could have revealed Himself to man so completely that no one could escape Him. This would have been tyrannical. So God chose the third option. He revealed Himself to man clearly enough so that all who sought for Him with all their hearts could find Him, whereas all who were of a contrary disposition could remain in the obscurity which they preferred. Pascal was also very wise when he has God say to all those whose search is accompanied by grave and honest doubt: If thou hadst not already found Me, thou wouldst not now be

searching for Me. Search for the utterly unknown is utterly impossible; all search bespeaks some initial vision, however dim, some preliminary assurance, however uncertain and perhaps illusory. But once man's search is initiated by Reality itself, it can become, if pursued with humility and skill, progressively rewarding. It is the testimony of all men of enlightened religious faith that their search for the Ultimate is rewarded with ever growing assurance, ever increasing spiritual light and power, and finally with a peace and joy which "the world" cannot give.

What seems to be called for, then, is "faith, hope, and charity." "Charity" or "love" is a unique blend of humility and acceptance. Faith generates hope and strengthens it as faith itself grows stronger. Hope bolsters faith when faith encounters its inevitable setbacks and is, for the time being, supplanted by corrosive doubt and threatened with blank despair. Faith as assurance may well generate certitude but never certainty, for it must always be compounded with the doubts which genuine humility and man's sense of finitude are bound to raise. But "the greatest of these," as St. Paul declares, is charity, or love—the love which we receive and which, as best we can, we echo in our reciprocal love of God and man and nature. For love is creative and binding in all its works, eliciting our faith and engendering in us that responsive love that alone can unite man to nature in natural piety, to his fellow men in human charity, and to God in joyous obedience and praise.

6 *Four Standards of Rationality*

How plausible is the neo-Kantian thesis which we have been exploring? Our answer will depend, in part, upon the inherent cogency of my argument. Is it valid *within* the framework of my basic presuppositions? If it is not, it must of course be revised or abandoned. But the answer of each reader of this book will also depend very considerably upon whether or not he can accept my presuppositions—that is, the concept or standard of rationality which underlies my analysis. What do we mean, each of us, by “rational” or “reasonable”? What is our all-inclusive criterion of reasonableness or rationality?

Our Western tradition is long and rich, and our contemporary Western culture is complex and diversified. It is not strange, therefore, that, even today, we should conceive of "rationality" in very different ways, some complementary and some mutually exclusive. It will be helpful, in final review and assessment of my neo-Kantian analysis, to list four conceptions of "rationality," each of which has its proponents in our day. These four conceptions constitute, I believe, a progressive series, the first being the least venturesome and the most precise and definitive, and each successive conception being more inclusive, and perhaps more bold and hazardous, than its predecessor. Let us briefly consider them in this order, starting with the most restricted and most universally acceptable.

LOGICAL RATIONALITY

This type of rationality is best exemplified in pure mathematics, even in its simplest forms, and in pure logic—for example, in such propositions as $5 + 7 = 12$, and "If A is greater than B, and B is greater than C, then A is greater than C." Here the basic criteria are: (a) the *clarity* of the component concepts and of their relation to one another, and (b) the *logical consistency* of these concepts with one another. Their consistency can further be analyzed into two distinguishable components—the component of *non-contradiction* and the component of *coherence*, where "coherence" signifies positive usefulness or helpfulness in contrast to otiose tautology. Any pattern or system of related concepts can then be said to be rational in this first, and narrowest, sense, in proportion: (a) as its several constituent concepts or ideas are them-

selves clear and not confused, (b) as their relations to one another are clear and non-contradictory, and (c) as each concept or subgroup of concepts makes some positive contribution to the total pattern or system of related concepts. The only values here involved are clarity, non-contradiction, and internal coherence, though one might add that a fourth value of "elegance," greatly prized by mathematicians and logicians, emerges whenever these other three values are present to a notable degree.

The validity of this type of rationality is indisputable. It recommends itself to all who delight in intellectual clarity, and it is the *sine qua non*, the necessary (though not sufficient) condition, of all rational thought and belief. Its limitations are no less obvious. As here defined, it does not relate itself to "reality," to "matters of fact," and therefore to "truth." * It suffices as a test of pure, but not applied, mathematics; of pure, but not applied, logic. Mathematical systems can be devised which are internally clear, non-contradictory, coherent, and elegant, but which are not therefore, *ipso facto*, applicable to our physical universe. Truth signifies, in addition, adequacy to fact. We must, then, if we would deal with judgments of fact, widen our conception of rationality.

FACTUAL RATIONALITY

Here we move into the realm of perceptual and scientific truth. Kant's famous dictum indicates the two prime conditions of such truth with classic brevity: "Concepts without percepts are empty; percepts without concepts are

* I must here ignore the controversial question as to the ontological status of the subject matter of pure logic and pure mathematics. The situation is not as simple as I have indicated.

blind." All our knowledge of the physical world in space and time depends essentially upon two factors, the sensory and the logical. We can know the existence and explore the nature of physical objects only by encountering them through sense perception. But mere sensation will never suffice. We must interpret our sensations as rationally as possible, that is, in obedience to the criteria of logical rationality.

We have noted Kant's insistence that knowledge and reality imply one another, and we have summarized Kant's account of reality as phenomenal, that is, as the sum total of all actual and possible objects of human sensory-rational experience. These real objects have, for Kant, the three crucial characteristics of coerciveness, order, and publicity. We have also stressed the fact that Kant does *not* assume, as is often done today, that this coercive, orderly public world exhausts the whole of Reality. Even in the first *Critique* he insists that speculative reason can conceive of a Reality greater than, and different from, our spatio-temporal world of sensory objects; and in his ethical writings he explores the noumenal world of what we have called moral "values." But he maintains to the end that the only world we can really "know," strictly speaking, is this sensory world of fact in space and time.

According to the standard of factual rationality, then, all factual judgments are judgments about a real public world with an orderly character of its own, and they are valid or true in proportion as they do justice to all our relevant sensory experiences, as they are rationally consistent and coherent, and as they are, in principle, communicable to other human beings. This standard of factual rationality applies equally to our everyday, common sense apprehensions of the physical world and to our

growing scientific comprehension of it. Science is merely the refinement of our ordinary perceptual knowledge—a refinement in which our sensory observations are rendered far more precise, extensive, and relevant (with the aid of controlled experimentation), and in which our interpretations of these observations are made much clearer, more inclusive, and more consistent (with the aid of mathematics). In this sense, our scientific knowledge is truer, more valid, and more reliable, than our everyday factual knowledge of nature.

In view of the nature and role of faith in religion we should note the inescapable role of faith in science at its rigorous best. Even the scientist cannot prove everything; even he must make some basic presuppositions on faith. He must, and does, assume from first to last that his sensory experiences are indeed clues to the existence and nature of a reality with a character of its own. He must also assume that this world is orderly and, further, that its order is of a type which his mind, constituted as it is, is able to apprehend, and, still further, that this order will persist in the future as it seems to have persisted in the past. Men, since the beginning of human reflection, have tended to make these assumptions in their everyday practical encounters with nature, and all modern scientists have, of necessity, made the same basic assumptions.

This complex act of faith was initially almost entirely blind and unsupported, but centuries of pre-scientific experience and scientific exploration have given it more and more pragmatic validity. These assumptions seem to “work,” to justify themselves. But no such pragmatic validation can ever amount to absolute proof. All we can say is that the scientist’s faith is far *more* enlightened, supported by far *more* evidence and far *more* rigorous

reflection, than the faith of the common man or the primitive savage. The scientist's "resultant" faith is in these ways superior to—truer and more rational than—the faith of those who lack scientific training and knowledge. This applies not only to the scientist's basic presuppositions; it applies also to his positive factual understanding of natural processes. This understanding is clearly superior to that of the common man. But it is still necessarily finite and incomplete; and it must always be so, because all men are finite and because the finite experience upon which all factual knowledge is based is never exhaustive, never complete or "all in."

There have been thinkers in every age who have insisted that such factual knowledge is the only real knowledge we can have. This belief is what we have labeled "scientism"—the dogma or uncritical and unproved *assumption* that the only valid knowledge available to us is factual knowledge based exclusively on rational interpretation of sensory evidence and best exemplified in the "exact" natural sciences.* This scientism goes far beyond a proper understanding of, and reliance on, science. It constitutes a philosophy which scientists, *qua* scientists, need not, and often do not, accept. The implications of this dogma are far-reaching. Scientism, so defined, refuses a priori to accept any of man's basic moral, aesthetic, or religious experiences as *cognitively* significant, that is, as providing him with *further* experiential bases for valid knowledge of the real. These value experiences, it is insisted, are not *really* encounters with objective values at all, because there *are* no objective values. Our value experiences can-

* Scientism can be defined more broadly to include reliance upon the social sciences and psychology and therefore upon non-sensory data, e.g., introspective observations.

not, therefore, by definition, supply us with clues to the existence and nature of values which characterize reality itself. They are *merely* emotional human responses to a reality which is, in its essence, neutral to all value. Scientism thus limits rationality to the factual rationality of the natural sciences.

The best way, and the only affirmative way, to refute "scientism" is to show that judgments of value can, in principle, be subjected to the same basic tests of cognitive validity to which the scientist subjects his judgments of fact, and to demonstrate, in addition, that moral and aesthetic values and the God of religious worship can properly be said to be "real" or "objective" in a sense strictly analogous to the way in which physical objects are said to be "objective" and "real." This is what I have tried to do in this Essay.

We should note, meanwhile, that even the disciple of scientism must, explicitly or implicitly, ascribe to one value—that is, truth—the status which he refuses to ascribe to other values. He believes, and claims, that his own philosophical position *is* true and that all positions which contradict, or go beyond, scientism are false. What does this imply? It implies that there is such a thing as truth, that the opposite of truth is falsity, that propositions can be more or less true or false, and that their truth or falsity is *not* just a matter of personal preference or social convention but, rather, is subject to testing by means of reliable criteria. So conceived, truth can be said to be a quality or characteristic of certain propositions—of those which somehow "are adequate to" or "do justice to" the actual nature of the reality referred to. All judgments that claim to be factually accurate claim to be true in this sense, or at least truer than other judgments. Their truth,

for the honest thinker, is valid in its own way, is subject to specific tests or criteria, and obligates such a thinker to accept it, insofar as he can apprehend it, and to reject its opposite, falsity. In short, the exponent of scientism *must* take truth "seriously" if he expects his fellow men to take him and his assertions seriously.*

NORMATIVE RATIONALITY

Factual rationality differs from purely logical rationality because it includes sensory experience as an essential component of knowledge. "Normative rationality" differs from factual rationality, in turn, in its more inclusive interpretation of experience. Scientism limits the experience which can contribute to valid and testable knowledge to sense experience. It does, of course, admit the undeniable fact that men do have moral, aesthetic, and religious experiences which they take seriously, and that they are continually making judgments, which they regard as true, concerning good and evil, beauty and ugliness, the holy and the profane. Scientism also admits that every society has its cultural norms or values which are powerfully operative in that society and which are therefore "socially" objective, that is, real components of the society in question. What scientism denies is the *cognitive* significance of these value experiences and the *validity* of these value judgments. It is this denial which I have rejected as unnecessary and invalid.

In dealing with this issue we must at once acknowledge

* Scientism also assumes that truth is "good"—not merely preferred by some people but definitely preferable. Because scientism is true, it *ought* to be accepted by all thoughtful and honest men. In this sense, at least, scientism presumes the objectivity not only of truth but also of goodness.

the deep cleavage in our society between those whose outlook is secular and those who subscribe to some form of religious faith. Many secularists today are critical of scientism and believe in objective moral and aesthetic values, but find themselves unable to believe in God or to regard any of man's religious experiences as cognitively significant. However justifiable or unjustifiable may be their religious scepticism, these humanists are certainly right in distinguishing a secular faith in goodness and beauty from a religious faith in God, and in insisting that religious faith entails problems of its own which must be dealt with on their own merits. Let us, then, exclude religious faith from the standard of "normative rationality" and discuss this concept in purely humanistic terms.

What does it mean to take man's moral and aesthetic experiences "seriously" and to ascribe cognitive significance to them? It means, first, the recognition that man is capable of having experiences of a distinctive character which we are justified in labeling "moral" and "aesthetic." It means, second, the acceptance of these experiences as at least possible confrontations or encounters with something which we call "goodness" and "beauty"—qualities which have a recognizable character of their own. The beauty and goodness thus encountered are, like other ultimates in human experience, ineffable. Like color, they can be experienced, but they cannot even be described to anyone who has had no first-hand experience of them. They are *sui generis* and unique; they can be known and understood *only* in terms of their own uniqueness, never by reference to something else with which they may be correlated. The good and the beautiful are encounterable, explorable, knowable, communicable, but not translatable.

Third, what we encounter in our moral and aesthetic experiences, if we take them seriously, is found to be, in its own way, as coercive and orderly as are the distinctive characteristics of the perceptual world of nature. The more we find and explore goodness and beauty, the more convinced we become that they have a distinctive character of their own which we must accept, and which therefore "obligates" us to respond to them in an appropriate manner. They obligate us, however, not by enforcing our response (like a causal law, which we cannot evade or break), but by putting us under a distinctive type of moral or aesthetic obligation which we can ignore or repudiate if we choose to do so, though only by doing violence to our own moral and aesthetic nature. We *cannot* defy the law of gravity; we *can* defy the moral law, as we can defy the laws of logic and ignore the requirements of scientific truth. But if we ignore our obligation to logic and truth, goodness and beauty, we do violence to our rational, moral, and aesthetic nature. If, on the other hand, we honor our normative capacities and explore these values wisely, we discover progressively that they possess their own order and rationale. As sensitive moral and aesthetic agents, we find ourselves in the presence of values which are orderly, not chaotic; we find that their orderliness gradually unfolds itself to us and makes more and more sense; we discover that they make our lives increasingly meaningful and rationally purposive.

We must at this point distinguish clearly between embodied and disembodied goodness and beauty. We never *encounter* beauty and goodness as disembodied. All we encounter are more or less good persons, acts, and institutions, and more or less beautiful objects in nature and among human artifacts. The values which are thus

embodied, moreover, are never absolute or perfect. No beautiful object is, to the discerning eye, the embodiment of perfect beauty; no person or act is, to a morally sensitive person, the acme of absolute goodness. What we encounter are always embodiments of finite and partial values.

Our very recognition of their finitude and imperfection indicates, however, our ability to *conceive* of a *more* perfect beauty and goodness; and our awareness that even our loftiest conceptions of beauty and goodness must inevitably fall short of omniscience clearly indicates our ability to conceive, in complete abstraction, of perfect or absolute Beauty and Goodness. *These Values*, as absolute, are, for us, necessary points of ultimate reference. We apprehend them conceptually without ever being able to comprehend them. Really to know them for what they are, we should have to be omniscient; and we are not omniscient. Yet, were we wholly ignorant of them, we should be quite unable to recognize, to value, and to appraise their finite embodiments; for if we had no apprehension whatever of Beauty and Goodness, we could not recognize the limited beauty of any work of art or the partial goodness of any person or act, nor could we judge one work of art to be more beautiful than another, or any act to be morally superior to any other act. Just as the scientist's recognition of partial finite truths and his perennial search for more truth presupposes an absolute Truth ever beyond his reach, so do our moral and aesthetic evaluations and quests presuppose an absolute Goodness and Beauty which, in all their perfect plenitude, ever elude our complete comprehension.

Our moral and aesthetic evaluations and judgments, in turn, are responsible or valid only in proportion as they

satisfy suitable criteria which are analogous to the criteria of responsible scientific judgments. Here, as in science, knowledge involves the rational interpretation of reliable and relevant primary experiences. This means that moral and aesthetic judgments, to be trustworthy or valid, must rest on sensitive moral and aesthetic responses and must reflect clear and responsible interpretations of these responses. This presupposes our ability, on the one hand, to deepen, enrich, and purify our moral and aesthetic experiences and thus to sharpen, as it were, our primary moral and aesthetic insights. It presupposes our ability, on the other hand, to increase the scope and power of ethical and aesthetic reflection. We must assume, in short, the possibility of advance in moral and aesthetic understanding, as we assume the superiority of science over ordinary perceptual knowledge and the possibility of scientific progress. We must acknowledge, in principle, the possibility of expertness in the creation and criticism of art and in moral conduct and moral insight, as we acknowledge expertness in science and technology. In these normative realms, as in the realm of factual knowledge, we must believe that man's quest is a meaningful quest for ever greater insight into what has an objective reality and character of its own, and that this quest involves the striving for ever more reliable (or veridical) normative experiences and the search for ever more adequate interpretations of these experiences.

All this, I submit, is what we actually mean by taking goodness and beauty, morality and art, "seriously." These are the basic presuppositions of morally responsible thought and conduct and of all responsible creation and critical appraisal in art. We do not argue about *mere* likes and dislikes. We cannot, with any show of reason,

condemn anyone for his strictly private and subjective preferences merely because they differ from our own. Nor can we, on any reasonable basis, approve or condemn any social norms, moral or aesthetic, which we judge to be *mere* social conventions and nothing more. A rigorous scientism would reduce us to the status of amoral beings in amoral societies, beings with nothing but irrational aesthetic and social preferences in societies with merely conventional aesthetic and social norms. Nothing could do greater violence to man's moral and aesthetic nature and to his deepest moral and aesthetic convictions. Scientism's allegiance to science makes sense; its refusal to transcend science and to recognize, in principle, the nature and significance of man's moral and aesthetic capacities makes no sense, repudiating as it does the intelligible claims of normative rationality.

Many secularists in our society will accept the foregoing argument but will decline to take the next and final step of including, within the area of the rational or reasonable, any type of religious experience or religious insight. They will endorse the standard of normative rationality, but they will find it impossible to conceive of a rational or reasonable religious faith. Is such a faith intelligible? Can we conceive of a still more synoptic rationality which takes man's religious experiences seriously and recognizes the possibility of a valid religious faith?

SYNOPTIC RATIONALITY

It was relatively easy to define purely logical rationality. Our task became progressively more difficult as we explored the standard of factual rationality and then the standard of normative rationality. It is still more difficult

to give an adequate account of synoptic rationality, because it is the most inclusive of these four standards and because the religious dimension of experience to which it seeks to do justice is itself so complex and diverse. Men have searched for God and have conceived of Him and worshiped Him in so many different ways that it is hard to find and formulate what is common to all religious belief and practice. We can, nevertheless, venture certain generalizations.

a) Religious experience seems always to involve a sense of awe in the presence of what is judged to be, in some sense, holy. The holy is, like color, truth, and goodness, ineffable; and man's appropriate response to it, in awe, is also unique and irreducible. These two terms can be understood only in their relation to one another and only by those who have had the experience in question. The holy is the only proper object of awe, awe the only proper response to the holy, and neither term can really be understood by anyone who has never felt awe in the presence of holiness.

b) Man's religious search, like all his other ventures and inquiries, has evolved from primitive crudity to great spiritual enlightenment. In primitive animism the holy was associated with spirits who animated natural objects and events, and primitive man's response to these spirits was highly superstitious. As polytheism slowly took the place of primitive animism, the gods were conceived of very anthropomorphically, as possessing human characteristics coupled with superhuman powers, but not primarily as righteous. Only gradually did holiness come to be identified with universal righteousness, and finally, in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, with righteous love. As the concept of God was thus spiritualized, man's response to

Him was transformed from anthropocentric hope and fear into theocentric awe and reverence. Man's religious beliefs and practices cannot be understood or appraised apart from their long evolution from their primitive superstitious beginnings to their highest, most enlightened, spiritual expression.

c) Deity has been conceived of, throughout, as both substantival and adjectival. The spirits of primitive animism were dynamic *beings* who inhabited natural objects and animated natural events; the gods of polytheism were likewise dynamic *beings* who acted upon the world and upon men in various ways; the God of Judaeo-Christian monotheism is also conceived of as the supreme *Being* and as the Ground and Source of all reality. The Divine differs essentially, in this respect, from the absolute Values of the humanistic idealist. These Values, though real and objective in their own way, are usually thought of, not as dynamic beings, but rather as passive essences awaiting man's discovery and allegiance. In all enlightened forms of monotheism, God is indeed conceived of as the Ground and Source of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, but He is also thought of as being, primarily, a dynamic spiritual Power operative in nature and human history.

The Divine has also been conceived of as "entering into" nature and history and as endowing things and events with unique spiritual significance or holiness. Primitive man believed that the spirits permeated certain objects or localities, making them sacred and taboo. The enlightened religious consciousness conceives of God as incarnate in His entire "sacramental universe," as particularly present to His saints and prophets, and (in Christianity) as uniquely Incarnate in Jesus Christ. Paul Tillich, for example, insists that God is not only the Ground of all

finite reality but the Infinite dimension of the finite. God, as uniquely Infinite, does indeed transcend all finite reality, but He is not just one among other beings, not even merely the Supreme Being; He is, rather, the *dimension* of ultimate mystery in all finite reality, the Ultimate reality and meaning of all that is. We orient ourselves to God, therefore, in proportion as we feel an "ultimate concern for the Ultimate," however variously we may express this ultimate concern. Tillich seems at times to prefer to think of God, not substantively, as *the* Ultimate (though he does speak of Him as the "God behind all gods"), but rather adjectivally, as the *dimension* of depth, of ultimacy, or of ultimate Being. This does not, of course, preclude God's special availability in particular times and places and His unique Incarnation in Jesus "as the Christ." *

d) When Divinity, or the Divine, is encountered with real religious awe, it is never believed to be completely comprehensible by the finite mind but is judged rather to be essentially mysterious and unfathomable by finite man. The mystery here attributed to God is not the not-yet-understood-but-in-principle-understandable "mystery" which science sets itself to solve—the mystery of the unsolved but, in principle, humanly solvable problem—for this type of mystery recedes before advancing reason as a morning fog is dissipated by the rising sun. The Divine is *essentially* mysterious; it *forever* defies our complete comprehension because the finite cannot, in principle, encompass the truly Infinite. It is this radical "otherness" and "transcendence" of God which Karl Barth and many other theologians are stressing today. Most mystics, both Western and Far Eastern, have been so impressed by the

* Cf. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, and *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I and II.

mysterious "otherness" of God that they have finally concluded that, though God can be actually encountered and intuited, He cannot be known conceptually at all. In talking about Him we are limited, they believe, to the *via negativa*—to the listing of all the things that He is *not*—until finally we are reduced to rapturous silence.

This conclusion reflects one extreme approach and interpretation. Its opposite is the conclusion of assured rationalists like Hegel that the ultimately real is the rational and that human reason can, in principle, encompass and comprehend this ultimate rationality. Religious faith at its reverent and humble best has tended to follow a middle course by declaring God to be partly but never perfectly knowable. Our highest understanding of Him is declared to be reliable and valid as far as it goes but necessarily to fall short of complete comprehension. Tillich refers to God as the "Ground and Abyss" of all reality. If by "Ground" we mean God's nature insofar as it is, in principle, comprehensible by man, and by "Abyss," the ultimate mystery of God's nature which no human mind can plumb to its very depths, Tillich's descriptive phrase is in line with man's most profound religious insights.

e) Religion in all its historical manifestations has three essential components—the cognitive, the experiential, and the morally volitional. However primitive or advanced, every world religion has its characteristic beliefs, its prescribed forms of public and private worship, and its emergent moral and social injunctions. Religious beliefs are often summarily expressed in a creed; traditional religious practices express the genius of a cult; and members of every cult are obligated to appropriate individual and social attitudes and conduct. Religions differ greatly, of course, in all three areas; but every vital religion has *some*

beliefs, *some* religious practices, and *some* moral injunctions to which its adherents attach major importance. Institutionalized religion has always been prone to dogmatic legalistic rigidity in all three areas. It has also tended to lapse into sentimental vagueness and indifferentism. Only at its mature spiritual best is a religion able to steer a middle course between these two extremes and to achieve and maintain theological clarity and profundity, ritualistic expressiveness, and moral and social fervor.

f) It need hardly be added that religion is simultaneously a social phenomenon, rooted in a historical tradition, and the intense private concern of the individual believer and worshiper. Religion, to be vital, needs, on the one hand, a continuing religious community with its distinctive traditional beliefs, cult, and moral injunctions—a community whose members are bound together by a common religious heritage, a common loyalty, and a common life. Within such a community, on the other hand, each individual must seek to relate himself to God on an “I-Thou” basis as his own conscience dictates. Religious experience is thus both private and shared. The beliefs which it presupposes and generates are both individual and corporate; its rituals provide a vehicle for both public and private worship; its moral injunctions reflect the group ethos and challenge the conscience of the individual. The dual obligation, individual and social, of each believer is bound to generate tensions which, at their best, are healthy and conduce to spiritual growth and corporate advance.

I have not attempted, in these generalizations, to explore or assess any of the distinctive beliefs, practices, or moral commands of the great world religions. That is not our present task. It is rather to define the generic pattern

of religious faith and practice with enough precision to enable us to know what we mean by "religion" and then to see whether, *in principle*, it is meaningful to talk about "true" or "false" religious beliefs, "valid" or "invalid" religious faith. Only thus can we hope to justify any religious beliefs as rational or reasonable; only thus can we test the meaning and workability of what we have called "synoptic rationality."

Two more observations are called for. Though every religion worthy of the name has its distinctive cult and pattern of prescribed conduct as well as its distinctive beliefs, it should be noted that the *validity* of both cultic practice and moral prescription necessarily depends upon the validity of the beliefs in question. In the trilogy of "cult, creed, and conduct," cult is indeed, as the locus of man's primary religious experience and of his first-hand encounter with the Divine, *primus inter pares*, the source of all religious belief and the guide and sanction of all religiously motivated conduct. The conduct of the believer, in turn, is the pragmatic test of all religious insight and sincerity. But both cult and conduct can be *justified* only by reference to the truth or validity of the beliefs in terms of which the Divine is apprehended, worshiped, and obeyed. Even though the experiences which are mediated, directed, and fostered by the cult provide the "empirical" basis for all vital religious belief, it is this belief which must dictate the *kind* of worship, public and private, that is appropriate to the Divine as here theologically apprehended. If, for example, God is conceived of as loving righteous Spirit, it follows that He should be worshiped with grateful hearts "in spirit and in truth." Similarly, we can religiously justify the command to love our neighbor only by conceiving of this command as God's command;

we ought to love our neighbor *because* we are all God's children and because God first loved us. To discuss the validity of any religious faith is, therefore, to discuss the validity or truth of its basic *beliefs* regarding the Deity. Only if these are trustworthy, can we with confidence participate in the worship of the cult and take seriously its moral and social injunctions.

The second observation is closely related to the first. Religious sceptics and agnostics find it impossible to participate with integrity in the practices of a religious cult or to ascribe any religious authority to its moral and social injunctions *because* they are unable to accept the beliefs of the religion in question as true and valid. How, indeed, could they do otherwise? How can one pray to, or worship, or try to obey a Deity in whose reality or being one cannot believe? Though a believer rightly insists that his beliefs are rooted in his primary experiences of prayer, forgiveness, renewal of strength, and so on, it is idle, if not actually dishonest, to ask the disbeliever to try to find in such experiences an empirical basis for faith, because he cannot have these experiences without some degree of *prior* faith. The disbeliever and the agnostic therefore agree with the honest believer that belief is crucial and that both cult and conduct lose all religious meaning and sanction if they cannot be justified by appeal to a faith that is itself capable of some kind of reasonable validation.

With these observations in mind, we can now return to our crucial question. In principle, can religious beliefs be validated? Can they meaningfully be said to be true or false without resort to an unjustifiable Pickwickian use of the concepts of truth and falsity? And if it is meaningful

and proper to judge them to be true or false, by what criteria can their alleged truth or falsity be tested?

All of these questions can, I am persuaded, be answered affirmatively: (1) because religious beliefs address themselves to what is judged, rightly or wrongly, to be objectively and independently real; (2) because, like all secular judgments for which truth is claimed, they reflect man's interpretation of certain relevant experiences; and (3) because the same *generic* criteria of truth which we invoke in all our secular quests for truth are applicable here.

1) There can be no question that religious beliefs are *meaningful*, because they assert the reality or being of the Divine, just as our perceptual or "factual" beliefs assert the reality or being of natural objects and events, and because they ascribe an objective character and certain attributes to Divinity just as our factual beliefs ascribe certain attributes and an objective character to nature. These religious beliefs may be partly or wholly mistaken and therefore more or less false, but those who accept them claim that they are true *in the same sense* in which they claim truth for their secular beliefs. Men can, of course, talk religious as well as secular nonsense; some professed religious beliefs are as unintelligible as are many irresponsible secular beliefs. But the religious beliefs which are worthy of our consideration are highly reflective and responsible beliefs. They may, in fact, all be false, but they are at least intelligible and meaningful. The "truth" that is claimed for them is *not* Pickwickian but consonant with the "truth" which is claimed for our most widely accepted and well-tested secular beliefs.

2) Meaningful and responsible religious beliefs in all the major religious traditions are judged, by those who

hold them, to be interpretations of evidence derived from primary religious experience and, rightly or wrongly, to be intelligible and reasonable interpretations of reliable and confirmable religiously empirical evidence. What is offered as relevant evidence differs very greatly, of course, in different religious traditions. The ultimate "empirical" appeal may be to the universal religious experience of mankind, or to the special religious experiences of a group (for example, the Jews) or of certain gifted individuals (for example, the mystics), or to the inspiration of certain religious leaders (for example, the Hebrew prophets), or to the crucial experiences of all who, guided and disciplined by an evolving religious tradition, seek God with all their hearts. But however variously the relevant experiences are conceived of, the religious consciousness invariably relies on such experiences for its primary data—for the "empirical" or "experiential" support for its emergent beliefs. It is the rationalistic philosophers, more often than men of religious faith, who have repeatedly attempted to validate religious faith by an appeal to pure reason; it is chiefly they, for example, who have formulated and relied on the ontological "proof" of God's existence. Religious worshipers, in contrast, have based their faith primarily upon what they have judged to be crucial religious experiences.

It is also significant, however, that all religious believers have sought, with varying results, to interpret these crucial experiences as intelligibly and reasonably as they could. Primitive man was no more successful in developing a clear and coherent theology than he was in working out a clear and coherent science or cosmology. In religion as in other areas, he tried his best to "explain" his primary experiences and observations in the language of myth.

Similarly, the so-called "higher" religions differ greatly in the clarity, coherence, and profundity of their respective theologies. Some make far more theological sense than others; some conflict far less than others with man's ever advancing secular understanding of reality. But all religious thought accepts, *in principle*, the challenge of intelligibility and rational coherence, however successful or unsuccessful any emergent theology may be judged to be. Religious belief has indeed lapsed again and again into obscurity and unintelligibility, but it has always *tried* to be intelligible and reasonable. It has never, at its vital best, deliberately *cultivated* irrational unintelligibility or valued obscurity for its own sake.

3) It follows that we do religious belief no injustice when we test it by the generic criteria of truth, that is, by the three criteria of "correspondence," "coherence," and "publicity." We do religion no violence when we insist that its beliefs can be accepted as valid only to the extent that they are based upon coercive and sharable religious experiences which can provide us with clues to the reality and nature of the Divine, and when we further insist that its theological assertions be tested by the criterion of conceptual clarity and coherence. Nor are we in any way unfair to religion when we conceive of the possibility of greater or lesser religious "expertness"—when we recognize the possibility that, in the realm of religion as in other realms of cognitive inquiry, some individuals and some traditions may be superior to others in the requisite discipline and in resultant insight and understanding. This expertness is precisely what the religious consciousness has always claimed for its founders and leaders, its prophets and saints. It is they whose insights have been accepted as authoritative, whose experiences

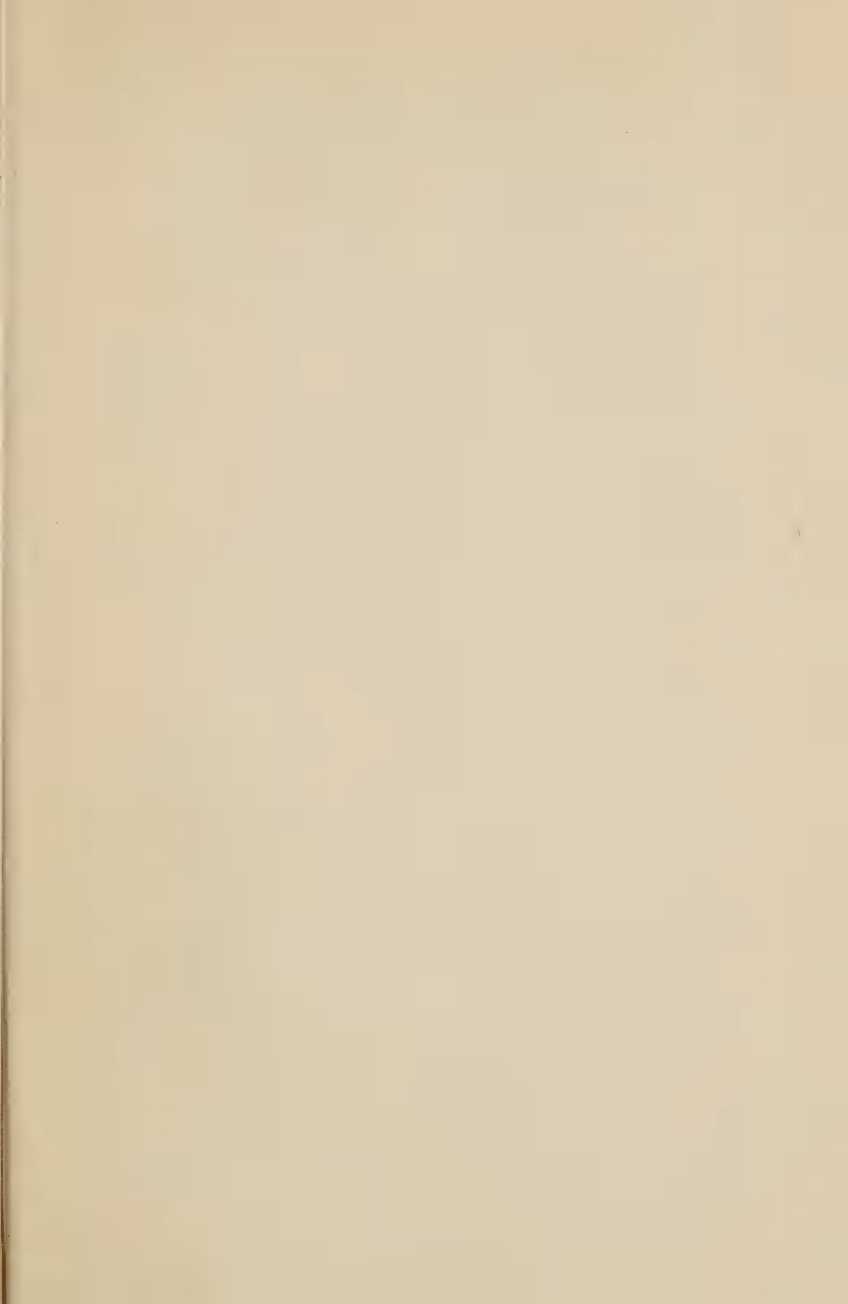
have been regarded as peculiarly inspired, and whose beliefs have been judged to be most illuminating.

This entire analysis is not offered, I repeat, in validation of any *specific* religious beliefs. It purports to be merely a validation, *in principle*, of the meaningfulness of coherent religious beliefs and of their *possible* truth. Its purpose has been to refute all a priori claims that religious beliefs must, by *definition*, be unintelligible or, if intelligible, then *necessarily* false. It is an attempt to justify our taking man's religious beliefs seriously enough to submit them to the tests we apply to all serious judgments of fact and judgments of value. It seeks, in short, to include religion with the scope of "rationality"—that is, to justify the inclusive standard of rationality which we have entitled "synoptic."

I have called attention to these four standards of rationality because all questions regarding the rationality or reasonableness of any normative or religious belief presuppose some understanding of rationality itself. If rationality is defined most narrowly, in purely logical terms, even factual judgments must be condemned as irrational. If only factual rationality is added, moral and aesthetic judgments must be declared irrational. If rationality is defined to exclude all religious faith, no such faith, however enlightened, can satisfy such a criterion. But why *need* rationality be narrowly defined? Why condemn a priori whole areas and dimensions of human experience which are of such crucial significance for man? Is it not far more reasonable to assume that Reality is endlessly complex, that man can encounter different facets of Reality in different types of experience, and that all these experiences, if they are orderly, coercive, and sharable in their respective ways, should be presumed, *in principle*,

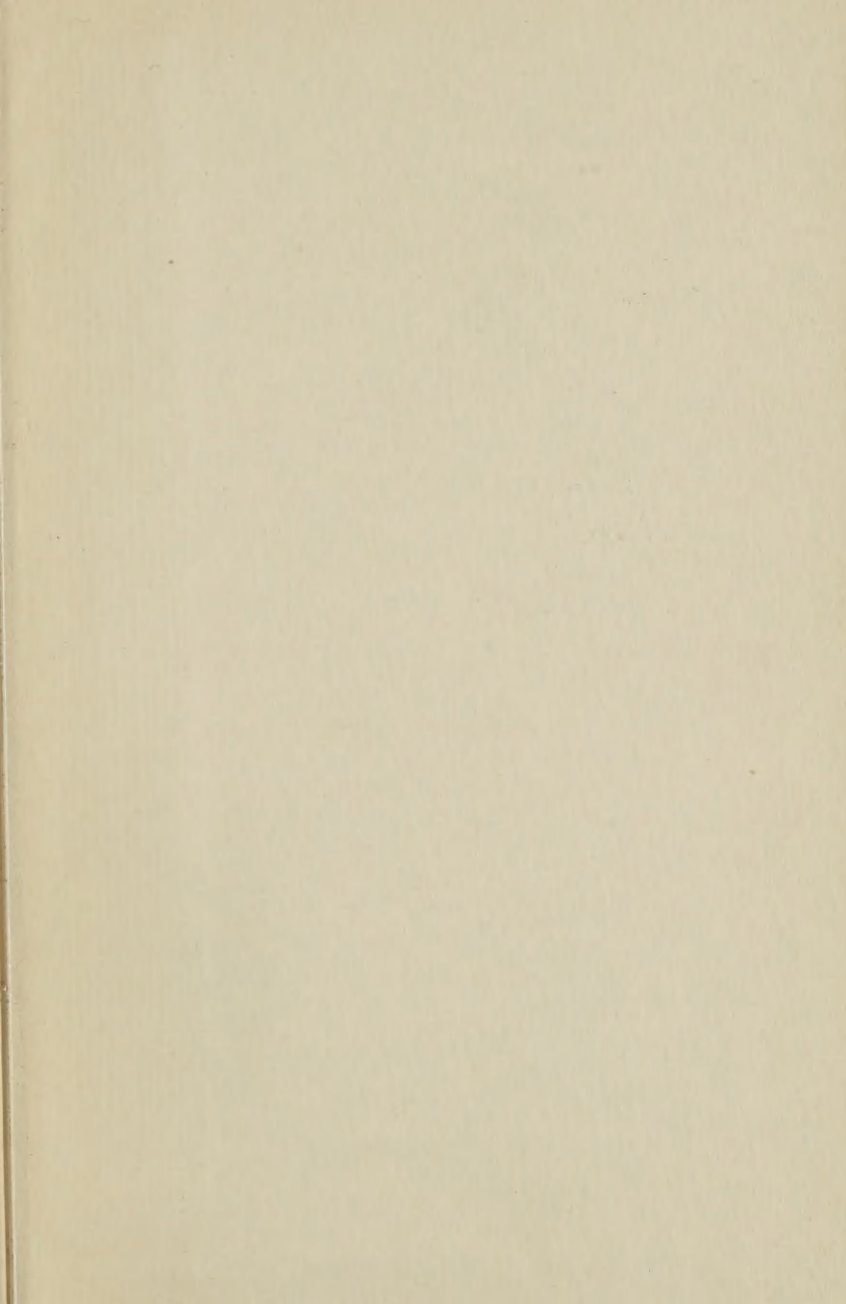
to be capable of providing him with precious and unique clues to this or that aspect of the Real? Such an assumption will not commit us in advance to *any* specific judgments in *any* area; all such judgments must still be tested by the generic criteria of truth. It will, however, keep us from excluding, with a priori prejudice, authentic sources of light and power which *may* in fact be available to man.

The basic presupposition of this Essay has been that all four of these standards of rationality are meaningful and useful, that they do not conflict but, rather, complement each other, and that it is utterly unjustifiable to rule out a priori the validity or usefulness of any one of them. I would plead, in the name of intellectual and spiritual humility, for the inclusion of all four in our attempt, as human beings, to explore Reality, to apprehend it as profoundly as possible, and to relate ourselves to it as wisely as possible.



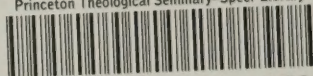
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